Stay on course: 9 apps to keep resolutions going

Whether it's saving money or finding a creative outlet, these can help new year goals. **In Money**

Penn State puts off vibes matching Michigan '23 run

Column: Team could win college national title, but James Franklin isn't Jim Harbaugh. **In Sports**

The best TV shows coming this year

Revival of "Daredevil" starring Charlie Cox and new season of "Stranger Things" with Millie Bobby Brown are among new series to watch. **In Life**

USA TODAY

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COX BY RICARDO MOREIRA/GETTY IMAGES; BROWN BY DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/GETTY IMAGES FOR NETFLIX

E2

Antifa militants ready to mobilize

Members say Trump will have to make first move

Will Carless
USA TODAY

In Philadelphia, anti-fascists are preparing for the day the leader of the local Proud Boys chapter gets out of prison, jailed for his role in the Jan. 6 insurrection. Local Antifa are sure he will receive a presidential pardon, only to return to the City of Brotherly Love to relaunch his career of spreading hate and picking fights.

In Miami, self-professed members of Antifa, a political movement of far-left militants who oppose neo-Nazis and white supremacists at demonstrations and other events, say they are bracing for a coming immigration crackdown. They're hoping President-elect Donald Trump's harshest campaign promises don't come to fruition. But they're ready in case they see civil rights being violated and decide they have to act.

In Ohio, a hardened Antifa coalition also waits to see what happens. Anti-fascist organizers and volunteers say they're gearing up in case America witnesses another "George Floyd moment" that galvanizes the far left and its black-clad militant wing into protests and action.

And it's the same in California, where disparate groups of anti-fascists across the state are waiting and watching to see how a second Trump term pans out, and whether they need to don their signature all-black clothing and hit the streets.

" 'If sh-- gets bad enough' – that's the operating phrase right there – there's always going to be a response," said Daryle Lamont Jenkins, a self-proclaimed anti-fascist and executive director of the One People's Project. "As we say in the Black community: 'Don't start nothing, won't be nothing.' "

Antifa is always a wild card.

Very few experts on domestic extremism truly understand the movement, which adherents call a political philosophy but opponents decry as everything from a thuggish menace to an evil army bent on destroying America.

During Trump's first term, Antifa rose to new prominence fighting street brawls with far-right extremist groups emboldened by Trump's election and rhetoric. Even after Trump lost in 2020, Antifa continued its growth, buttressing the Black Lives Matter

See ANTIFA, Page 6A

Savage 'hurricane of fire' lays siege to California

Thousands flee LA area; forecasters warn 'worst is yet to come'

Wind-driven flames consume the Theatre Palisades in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles on Wednesday as multiple wildfires set homes and hillsides aflame and residents were forced to run for their lives. APU GOMES/GETTY IMAGES

Walls of flame close in on homes in the suburb of Pacific Palisades in the Santa Monica Mountains. Smoke enveloped much of Los Angeles.
DAVID SWANSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

John Bacon, Michelle Maltais, Jordan Mendoza and Jeanine Santucci
USA TODAY

At least two people were killed and tens of thousands fled their homes as multiple wildfires driven by powerful Santa Ana winds blasted parts of Los Angeles County on Wednesday, setting homes and hillsides ablaze as the roadways clogged with residents scrambling to safety.

There also were a "high number of significant injuries to residents who did not evacuate in addition to first responders who were on the fire line," Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency as firefighters struggled with water supplies stretched to their limit. Much of Los Angeles was enveloped in smoke.

And meteorologist Ryan Maue warned on social platform X on Wednesday, "This is a hurricane of fire."

See WILDFIRES, Page 2A

Pall of smoke, ash puts millions at risk

Even the healthy can suffer long-term consequences. **2A**

"Whether rich or poor, it doesn't matter – it's for the people."

Inah Canabarro Lucas, 116
Referencing her love of soccer

Now the world oldest person, Lucas credits her longevity to the Lord. "He is the secret of everything," she said.
PROVIDED BY CARLOS MACEDO/LONGEVIQUEST

Brazil's 'devoted' soccer-loving nun now world's oldest living person at 116

Saleen Martin USA TODAY

Nearly a week after the death of the oldest person in the world, a nonprofit documenting the world's oldest people has welcomed the world's newest title-holder.

At 116, Inah Canabarro Lucas is now the world's oldest person. She is also the 20th oldest person in recorded history. The woman, who is from Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, was confirmed by LongeviQuest, the organization announced Saturday.

Her confirmation comes after the death of 116-year-old Tomiko Itooka of Japan on Dec. 29, who died from natural causes. After her death, Japan's oldest living person became 115-year-old Okagi Hayashi, who lives in the Gifu Prefecture.

See OLDEST PERSON, Page 4A

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Smoke from wildfires puts millions at risk

Toxic chemicals in air are harmful to human health

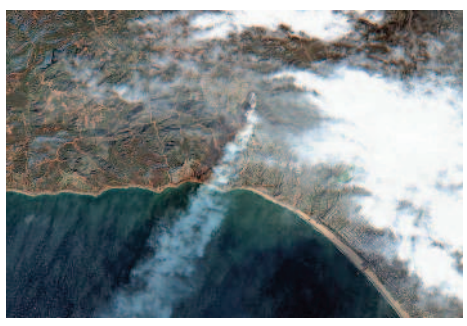
Eduardo Cuevas
USA TODAY

Southern California – with sprawling cities, clogged freeways and heavy industry – is already notorious for some of the worst air quality in the nation. This week's wildfires are putting millions of people at risk for immediate health problems and longer-term issues.

When most people think about the dangers of fire, they think about burns, said Dr. Cedric "Jamie" Rutland, a national spokesperson for the American Lung Association and a pulmonologist in Orange County, near Los Angeles. But smoke is a major contributor to health problems, he said, and with such widespread fires "it's going to affect the surrounding region."

Wildfire smoke – burning trees and shrubs but also homes and other manmade materials – contains toxic chemicals harmful to human health immediately and over longer periods. These carry risks such as increases in asthma attacks, but even longer-term issues with evidence showing increased risk of cancer and dementia.

"Predicting where ash or soot from a fire will travel, or how winds will impact air quality, is difficult, so it's important for everyone to stay aware of the air quality in your area, make plans, and take action to protect your health and your family's health," Dr. Muntu Davis,



Smoke rises north of the Santa Monica area on Tuesday, as wildfires raged across California. PROVIDED BY COPERNICUS SENTINEL-2/AFP VIA GE

the county's health officer, said in a statement. "Smoke and ash can harm everyone, even those who are healthy."

Who's at highest risk?

People at highest risk from wildfire smoke include children, older adults, and those who are pregnant, have heart or lung conditions, or weakened immune systems, Davis said.

Still, even healthy people can be affected. Fire smoke can cause headaches, dizziness and nausea, which may also be a sign of exposure to carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas that cuts oxygen to our organs and tissues, Rutland said. At high levels, it can be deadly.

Why air pollution is dangerous

Fires release tiny molecules called fine particulate matter that are small enough to enter the body through the tubes that carry air into our lungs and end up in our bloodstream, Rutland said.

Los Angeles already has the nation's worst ozone pollution, which has been described as sunburn of the lungs, in addition to some of the worst particle pollution in the U.S. Lower-income people and people of color tend to live areas that are already more polluted, leading to more chronic health issues. This puts them at even greater risk when fires blaze. Along with trees and brush, homes and other structures have burned in the current blaze. As metals and plastic burn, they release toxins into the air, which can activate inflammatory responses, triggering asthma and heart attacks and scarring lung tissues, Rutland said.

What areas are at highest risk from the current fire?

Fires in Southern California are at the coast, mountains and desert after powerful winds swept through the sprawling mega-region.

Even without being near the fires or in an evacuation zone, smoke from the Palisades, near the ocean, to the Eaton and Hurst, along the mountains, fires can travel far and wide across the metropolitan region of nearly 19 million people.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District, a regulatory agency for the region, issued advisories in northwest and eastern Los Angeles County for smoke. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health warned of unhealthy air in the county through Wednesday.

Steps to protect yourself from wildfire smoke

- Check local air quality through trusted resources like airnow.gov or your local district. In immediate areas, heed evacuation warnings and orders.
- Stay inside if you see or smell smoke from a wildfire. Indoors, close windows and doors. Use a higher-efficiency HEPA filter. If you can't buy a commercial portable air filter, you can create your own. One example is the Corsi-Rosenthal box made from simple materials of an air filter, box fan and duct tape.
- Create a "clean room" in your home, especially a room where you sleep or spend a lot of time. The Environmental Protection Agency says this room should be free from activities that create particles from cooking or smoking. Doors should be kept closed to prevent smoke from entering. A portable air cleaner can make the room's air cleaner than the rest of the home.
- Avoid outdoor activities. If you have to go outdoors when air quality is poor, use a respirator, such as an N95 mask. This can drastically reduce inhaling pollutants.
- If it's difficult to create stay indoors or create safe conditions, seek shelter elsewhere.

Wildfires

Continued from Page 1A

"We're facing a historic natural disaster. And I think that can't be stated strong enough," said Kevin McGowan, director of emergency management for Los Angeles County.

The deaths occurred in the Eaton Fire, which ignited inland in Altadena, near Pasadena, and quickly grew to more than more than 16 square miles.

The Palisades Fire, which had burned nearly 3,000 acres by early Wednesday, raged between the expensive beach towns of Santa Monica and Malibu. Photos from the scene showed homes ablaze, and Los Angeles City Fire Chief Kristin Crowley said 10,000 homes were threatened.

"We are absolutely not out of danger yet," Crowley said.

A third blaze, the Hurst Fire, ignited in Sylmar in the San Fernando Valley northwest of downtown Los Angeles, and had burned at least 500 acres prompting evacuations of some nearby residents.

All three fires were listed as 0% contained as of midday Wednesday.

About 250,000 California residents were without power, according to USA TODAY's outage tracker.

Cal Fire has listed the causes of the three primary fires – Palisades, Eaton and Hurst – as "under investigation." But even before the fire started, the National Weather Service had issued its highest alert for extreme fire conditions for much of Los Angeles County. The culprits were low humidity, dry vegetation due to a lack of rain and powerful winds.

The weather service office in Los Angeles warned Monday that wind gusts could reach 100 mph in some areas this week, prompting "extreme fire behavior" wherever blazes ignited.

"This is a particularly dangerous situation – in other words, this is about as bad as it gets in terms of fire weather," the weather service office in Los Angeles warned Monday. "Stay aware of your surroundings. Be ready to evacuate, especially if in a high fire risk area. Be careful with fire sources."

Wind gusts of up to 60 mph were expected to continue through Thursday, Cal Fire said, potentially aiding in "further fire activity." The National Weather Service in Los Angeles said Wednesday the "high speed river of air" remained over Los Angeles County, fueling a "widespread, major wind event." The good news was the air was moving southward and should cause the winds to decrease slowly, the weather update said.

A man tries to save his property from the flames marching toward upscale neighborhoods in the Pacific Palisades outside Los Angeles, where fire authorities estimated up to 10,000 homes were threatened. DAVID SWANSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

President Joe Biden was in Los Angeles to dedicate two new national monuments – the ceremony was canceled – and for the birth of his first great-grandchild.

Joining Newsom at a Wednesday briefing, he said the federal government would do "anything and everything and as long as it takes."

Biden said he has directed the Defense Department to rapidly provide additional firefighter personnel and equipment, and pointed to 10 Navy helicopters coming to assist from San Diego, among other forms of aid.

"It's astounding what's happening," said Biden.

Vice President Kamala Harris, a California native, pledged her support for the burning communities. She issued a statement Wednesday saying she was being briefed on the fires and reiterated President Joe Biden's offer of federal assistance.

Harris expressed gratitude for the "heroic first responders" risking their own safety.

"A proud daughter of California, I know the damage that wildfires have on our neighbors and communities," she said. "I also know that the impact is often felt long after the fire is contained."

> **"This is a particularly dangerous situation - in other words, this is about as bad as it gets in terms of fire weather."**
>
> **National Weather Service**
> Los Angeles office

Some celebrities were forced to evacuate, including actors Eugene Levy, Jamie Lee Curtis, Mandy Moore, Mark Hamill and Cary Elwes, who tagged his social media evacuation video "#Biblical." TV personalities Spencer Pratt and Heidi Montag lost their homes, they said on social media.

Evacuees described nightmarish escapes.

Among those who lost their homes to the Eaton Fire were Alexia Palomino and her mom, who had lived in their single-story Spanish-style house in Altadena for 15 years.

Palomino, 27, said she took one look back at the house as she pulled away in her Ford Bronco in the middle of the night, driving over debris clogging the street.

"You couldn't see and couldn't breathe," she said. Along with lost memories, the home held heirloom Mexican textiles and her grandmother's jewelry.

Zen Buddhist priest and teacher Karen Maezen Miller had tended a 109-year-old Japanese garden in Sierra Madre for more almost three decades. On Tuesday night, she and her husband left it at a run. The power went out and they drove through darkness for what seemed like forever, flames in their rearview mirror.

Miller, 68, has spent decades contemplating the impermanence of life.

"But of course there's this thing called hope," she said. "It flares up like an ember."

Contributing: Reuters; Seth Jacobson, USA TODAY Network – New England; Jonathan Limehouse, Brendan Morrow, Joey Garrison, Pamela Avila, Trevor Hughes, Elizabeth Weise, Edward Segarra, N'dea Yancey-Bragg, Beth Weise, Doyle Rice and Terry Collins, USA TODAY

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City of Minneapolis and DOJ agree on police reforms

Federal probe found violations by police

N'dea Yancey-Bragg
USA TODAY

The city of Minneapolis has agreed to make systemic reforms to its police department after a federal investigation sparked by the 2020 murder of George Floyd found a pattern of civil rights violations including unjustified deadly force and discrimination.

The city, its police department and federal officials reached a court-enforceable agreement known as a consent decree, the Justice Department announced this week. The agreement aims to prevent excessive use of force and racially discriminatory policing and to protect the public's First Amendment rights. An independent monitor will be appointed to assess whether the requirements of the decree are being met and report publicly on the city's progress.

"Through this consent decree, the City and the Minneapolis Police Department have committed to instituting reforms that will make Minneapolis a model law enforcement agency that respects everyone's civil and constitutional rights," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

The announcement in Minneapolis comes after the Justice Department reached a similar agreement in Louisville, Kentucky, where the 2020 police killing of Breonna Taylor sparked major protests. The Justice Department has been enforcing more than a dozen such agreements over the past four years after Attorney General Merrick Garland reversed a Trump administration policy limiting the use of consent decrees.

Here's what to know about consent decrees:

What is a consent decree?

The 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act gave the civil rights division of the Justice Department the power to investigate systemic police misconduct. Of nearly 70 investigations conducted between 1994 and 2016, 20 resulted in the creation of court-enforced consent decrees, according to a 2017 report from the Justice Department.

These decrees are legal agreements requiring changes that are overseen by a federal court and an independent monitor. Conducting the investigations, negotiating the agreements and implementing reforms often take years to complete.

The Justice Department is currently enforcing 15 existing agreements and has opened 12 new investigations into law enforcement agencies since Biden's term began.

Do consent decrees work?

Consent decrees have been credited with successfully improving some of the country's 18,000 police departments. In October, the Justice Department and the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico, sought to end certain portions of their consent decree after its independent monitor found the city and police department have fully complied with 99% of the consent decree's terms.

In Ferguson, Missouri, which became an epicenter for police reform after mass protests following the fatal police shooting of Michael Brown in 2014, there were major changes eight years later. Ferguson monitor Natashia Tidwell reportedly cited significant progress in officer training and community policing. The mostly all-white police department is more racially diverse. Traffic stops are less frequent and systems have been set up to hear resident complaints.

But some officials have criticized the court-enforced plans for being expensive, time-consuming and ineffective. Jim Pasco, executive director of the Fraternal Order of Police, previously told USA TODAY consent decrees can exacerbate tension between police and the communities.

The union representing Louisville Metro Police officers filed a motion in federal court opposing the city's recently signed consent decree, which has not yet been approved by U.S. District Court Judge Benjamin Beaton and enacted. The River City Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 614 argued the 242-page agreement alters working conditions of officers and has the potential to erode the union's collective bargaining capabilities.

The city of Memphis, Tennessee, told the U.S. Department of Justice in a letter last month it will not enter into a consent decree with the government following the completion of its pattern-or-practice investigation into the Memphis Police Department. The investigation was announced months after Tyre Nichols was fatally beaten by officers with the Memphis Police Department's SCORPION Unit, though the DOJ said it did not start the investigation solely because of that incident.

"We believe there are better ways to reimagine policing that do not slow the process or cost the taxpayers millions of dollars," the letter read.

What happens next in Minneapolis?

The consent decree in Minneapolis is pending court approval. If enacted, it will require officers to emphasize de-escalation techniques, limit pretextual stops and avoid handcuffing children under the age of 14. The department must also prioritize nonpolice response to calls involving behavioral health issues, thoroughly investigate complaints and hold officers accountable.

The agreement comes after a 92-page Justice Department report found Minneapolis police used excessive force, unlawfully discriminated against Black and Native American people, violated the rights of people engaged in speech protected by the First Amendment and discriminated against people with behavioral health disabilities.

The investigation was launched nearly a year after former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes. Floyd's death in May 2020 sparked nationwide protests against police brutality and systemic racism.

"Our commitment to securing a federal consent decree has never wavered – it has been a top priority of my administration, and we are ready to act," said Mayor Jacob Frey. "This agreement reflects what our community has asked for and what we know is necessary: real accountability and meaningful change. I'm grateful to the Department of Justice for their partnership and urgency in helping us finalize this decree, ensuring we didn't lose this critical opportunity to advance reforms and build on the important work already underway."

Contributing: Reuters; Bart Jansen, Kelly Puente, and Terry Collins USA TODAY; Lucas Finton, Memphis Commercial Appeal; Josh Wood, Louisville Courier Journal

Another storm is brewing this week

Eastern, central US are in the predicted path

Christopher Cann
USA TODAY

Another major winter storm is expected to slam portions of the central and eastern U.S. this week, with heavy snow and strong winds threatening to induce dangerous travel conditions, knock out power and ground flights, forecasters warned.

Unlike the deadly storm that barreled over the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic regions days ago, the incoming system will first bring snow to the South before swinging toward the Northeast, where it could bring flurries to Washington, D.C., and other major cities.

Beginning Wednesday night, the storm system will move over Texas, Arkansas and the Tennessee Valley, bringing 4 to 8 inches of snow to a portion of the south-central and southeastern U.S. that has experienced bitterly cold temperatures from a blast of Arctic air.

Kevin Vinegar clears snow off his car after a winter storm dumped snow and ice on Louisville, Ky., on Monday.
MICHAEL CLEVENGER/USA TODAY NETWORK

"In places that don't get snow or ice very often, such as Austin, Dallas, Little Rock, and Nashville, it will be a big deal," AccuWeather meteorologist Tom Kines told USA TODAY earlier this week.

As the storm pushes east, forecasters expect it will bring snow to Nashville, Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina, as it begins passing over the Appalachians early this weekend. Major airports throughout the central and eastern U.S. could see delays and cancellations.

Warnings across south-central US

Winter storm warnings in northeastern Texas, southeastern Oklahoma, southern Arkansas and northern Louisiana are set to take effect early Thursday morning and expire Friday afternoon.

The National Weather Service office in Dallas – where the yearly historical snowfall average is 1.6 inches – said the storm could dump 2 to 4 inches of snow in the city and the surrounding area, with some isolated snowfall amounts reaching 8 inches.

If Dallas gets half a foot of snow, it would be among the "top-five snowfalls on record," according to AccuWeather.

"Roads, and especially bridges and overpasses, will likely become slick and hazardous," warned the weather service office in Shreveport, Louisiana.

The worst of the snow is expected just before football fans flock to Dallas' Cotton Bowl for the national college football semifinal featuring Ohio State vs. Texas.

AT&T Stadium is equipped with a retractable roof, so the game won't be directly impacted by the frosty weather. Traveling to the game will be the issue as drivers will likely face icy and snow-covered roads.

Snow again in the northeast?

It's uncertain how much snow, if any, the storm will bring to the Mid-Atlantic and New England. Scenarios vary widely depending on how much momentum the storm keeps up as it barrels over the Appalachians.

"These scenarios range from the storm continuing on nearly straight to the east with little (or no) snow reaching the central Appalachians and upper mid-Atlantic to a storm strengthening and turning northward with an extensive zone of major snow and ice reaching through the mid-Atlantic and into southeastern New England from Saturday to early Sunday," said AccuWeather meteorologist Paul Pastelok in an online forecast.

Contributing: Doyle Rice, USA TODAY

Girl Scouts are discontinuing these two cookie flavors

Amaris Encinas
USA TODAY

A couple of flavors will be missing from next year's iconic Girl Scout Cookie lineup, so you'll want to make sure to stock up now.

Both Toast-Yay! and Girl Scout S'mores will be retired at the end of the 2025 season, which kicked off Tuesday, said Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA).

Toast-Yay! and Girl Scout S'mores join Raspberry Rally, a cookie discontinued in 2023, a year after its debut. Thin Mints crispy cookie sister appeared on eBay, an online third-party seller at about four times the price shortly after the Girl Scouts announced a "pause" on the sale and distribution of the raspberry-flavored cookie.

The good news is that these soon-to-be-discontinued cookies will be available for purchase alongside cult classics, like Thin Mints and Tagalogs, while supplies last. There is also the distinct possibility that these cookies may return for another season, according to GSUSA.

"Never say never! We routinely re-evaluate our cookie lineup to make room for new innovations. Discontinuing Toast-Yay! and Girl Scout S'mores may lead to something new and delicious," a GSUSA spokesperson shared in Tuesday statement.

Here's what to know about the 2025 Girl Scout Cookie lineup, including where to buy the cookies.

Which Girl Scout cookies are discontinued?

The Girl Scouts plan to retire Girl Scout S'mores and Toast-Yay! cookie flavors at the end of the 2025 season.

The Girl Scouts are discontinuing some flavors of their famous cookies.
SCOTT P. YATES/USA TODAY NETWORK.

Cookie lineup for the 2025 Girl Scout cookie season

This year's cookie lineup includes all of the classics, including Thin Mints, and a number of other flavors:

- **Adventurefuls:** Indulgent brownie-inspired cookies topped with caramel flavored crème with a hint of sea salt.
- **Caramel Chocolate Chip:** Chewy cookies with rich caramel, semisweet chocolate chips and a hint of sea salt.
- **Caramel deLites/Samoas:** Crisp cookies with caramel, coconut and chocolaty stripes.
- **Do-si-dos/Peanut Butter Sandwich:** Crunchy oatmeal sandwich cookies with peanut butter filling.
- **Girl Scout S'mores:** Crunch graham sandwich cookies with chocolate and marshmallow filling.
- **Lemonades:** Savory, refreshing shortbread cookies topped with a tangy lemon-flavored icing.
- **Lemon-Ups:** Crispy lemon cookies baked with inspiring messages.
- **Peanut Butter Patties/Tagalongs:** Crispy cookies layered with peanut butter and covered with a chocolaty coating.
- **Thin Mints:** Crisp, chocolate cookies dipped in a delicious mint chocolaty coating.
- **Toast-Yay!:** Toast-shaped cookies full of French toast flavor and dipped in delicious icing.
- **Toffee-tastic:** Rich, buttery cookies with sweet, crunchy toffee bits.
- **Trefoils:** Shortbread cookies inspired by the original cookie recipe.

Where can I buy Girl Scout cookies?

A $6 box of Girl Scout cookies can either be purchased online, or in-person at cookie booths across the country.

The season is recognized nationally from January through April, but timing varies from region to region, according to the organization. For those looking to buy local, visit www.girlscoutcookies.org to find a booth near you.

- You can place an order online to be delivered directly to your home at www.girlscoutcookies.org on or after Friday, Feb. 21.
- If you know a registered Girl Scout, reach out to learn how she's selling cookies. If you don't know a Girl Scout, check with your local council or use the Girl Scout Cookie Finder.
- You can also text COOKIES to 59618 to stay informed about how to purchase Girl Scout Cookies.

Contributing: Mary Walrath-Holdridge and Gabe Hauari

Trump asks justices to block sentencing in hush money case

Maureen Groppe, Bart Jansen and Aysha Bagchi
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President-elect Donald Trump asked the Supreme Court on Wednesday for an emergency order blocking the sentencing, scheduled for Friday, in his New York hush-money criminal case.

On Tuesday, a state judge rejected Trump's request to postpone the sentencing.

The legal battle is playing out as Trump prepares to return to the White House, and he said the sentencing would interfere with his transition.

Trump wants all proceedings paused while he argues the case should be dismissed because of presidential immunity.

Allowing the conviction to stand, his lawyers told the Supreme Court, would "gravely undermine the American Presidency as we know it."

"We will respond in court papers," a spokesperson for Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office said.

Trump was convicted of falsifying business records to hide payments to a porn actress made before the 2016 election.

Associate Judge Ellen Gesmer, a judge in New York state's appellate division, denied Trump's request for a sentencing delay Tuesday, a day after Judge Juan Merchan rejected the same request. Merchan had previously rejected Trump's request to dismiss the case.

Merchan said the best way to bring finality to the case was to sentence Trump without prison time, a fine or probation while his appeals continued. Merchan wrote that Trump's request for a delay was mostly "a repetition of the arguments he has raised numerous times in the past."

Trump's lawyers said Merchan dramatically understated the "burden, disruption, stigma, and distraction" that the case is imposing on Trump's transition efforts.

"Forcing President Trump to prepare for a criminal sentencing in a felony case while he is preparing to lead the free world as President of the United States in less than two weeks imposes an intolerable, unconstitutional burden on him that undermines these vital national interests," they wrote.

And the prospect of Trump having to appeal his conviction while in office is "a situation that the doctrine of Presidential immunity squarely rejects," his lawyers said.

Trump contends the Supreme Court's July decision shielding former presidents from criminal charges for official acts in office made him immune in the New York case.

Trump's lawyer, Todd Blanche, had argued that immunity shielding sitting presidents from criminal charges for official acts while in office extends to the transition period between an election and inauguration. But because Trump is the first former president ever charged criminally or convicted, immunity remains largely untested in court.

Merchan ruled that the case dealt with his personal conduct.

Because of the impending sentencing, Trump has simultaneously filed emergency requests with both the Supreme Court and the New York Court of Appeals, rather than waiting for a lower state appeals court to act.

Garland to release report on Trump election charges

Classified documents portion will be withheld

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Attorney General Merrick Garland intends to release part of special counsel Jack Smith's report about election interference charges against President-elect Donald Trump before he takes office, even though the charges were dismissed.

But the government will withhold part of the report about classified documents, the Justice Department announced Wednesday.

A federal judge blocked the release of the entire report Tuesday, based on a request from two of Trump's co-defendants in the classified-documents case. But government lawyers argued in a filing at the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that the restriction on the portion of the report about election interference charges was unnecessary and unjustified.

Smith prepared the report in two volumes, one about Trump's charges of election interference and one about the documents case. Department lawyers said Garland plans to release the volume on election charges, but the second volume about the classified documents would not be released publicly as long as charges remain pending against two of Trump's co-defendants.

The second volume would be available for review by the top Republican and Democratic lawmakers on the House and Senate Judiciary Committees, the lawyers said.

"The Attorney General intends to release Volume One to Congress and the public consistent with … and in furtherance of the public interest in informing a co-equal branch and the public regarding this significant matter," said the filing by Brian Boynton, principal deputy assistant attorney general; Markenzy LaPointe, U.S. attorney in southern Florida; and Mark Freeman, a lawyer in the civil division. "This limited disclosure will further the public interest in keeping congressional leadership apprised of a significant matter within the Department while safeguarding defendants' interests."

Trump is trying to block the release of the entire report, which could contain the most detailed account yet of the criminal accusations against him, less than two weeks before he returns to the White House on Jan. 20.

Two of his staffers, co-defendants Walt Nauta and Carlos De Oliveira in the classified-documents case, argued the release of the "promises to be a one-sided, slanted report" that has "a single purpose: convincing the public that everyone Smith charged is guilty of the crimes charged."

Special counsels typically write reports explaining their investigations and the decisions about whether to bring charges. Trump faced two federal indictments before judges dismissed the cases at Smith's request because of longstanding Justice Department policy against prosecuting a sitting president.

Smith preparing a final report "should have been no surprise" to Trump because other special counsels such as Robert Mueller, who investigated Russian interference in the 2016 election; Robert Hur, who investigated President Joe Biden's handling of classified documents when not in public office; and John Durham, who reviewed the 2016 probe, each issued final reports as required by department regulations, the lawyers said.

But U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon ordered Garland and Smith on Tuesday not to release or share the report or any drafts outside the Justice Department unless an appeals court rules differently. Cannon, a Trump appointee, had previously dismissed the charges by ruling that Smith was appointed and funded illegitimately.

Trump welcomed Cannon's decision at a news conference Tuesday and called Smith "deranged" and "disgraced."

"If they're not allowed to issue the report, that's the way it should be," Trump said. "That's great news."

Smith's report is expected to provide the fullest description yet about the investigation that led to two federal indictments against Trump, one for allegedly conspiring to overturn the 2020 election and the other for allegedly mishandling classified documents after leaving the White House.

Trump has maintained he did nothing wrong and that the charges represented partisan attacks from the Democratic Biden administration to interfere with the 2024 election.

In Washington, Trump was charged with conspiring to overturn the 2020 election with baseless claims of widespread fraud. He was also charged with obstructing Congress from counting Electoral College votes on Jan. 6, 2021, when a riot of his supporters at the Capitol temporarily halted the count.

Amy Carter wipes her eyes during a ceremony for her father, former President Jimmy Carter, at the Capitol on Tuesday. Carter will lie in state in the rotunda until a service at the National Cathedral on Thursday. JACK GRUBER/USA TODAY

Amy Carter returns to Washington for service

Savannah Kuchar
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Former President Jimmy Carter's youngest child and only daughter was among those gathered in Washington Tuesday to honor her father on the highest national stage.

Amy Carter, 57, sat with her older brothers – Jack, Chip and Jeff – and other members of the Carter family inside the Capitol rotunda, as members of Congress and other leaders paid their respects to the late 39th president.

Carter's casket was brought to the ornate hall on Capitol Hill via a horse-drawn caisson. The funeral procession down Washington streets was meant to mirror his inaugural parade in 1977 when Carter and his wife Rosalynn walked on foot from the Capitol to the White House. Amy Carter, then 9, joined her parents for a portion of the journey.

Amy Carter quickly became an object of public fascination during her father's presidency. From dining with movie stars to roller skating with friends on the south lawn, her life as a child in the White House – the first since John F. Kennedy's Camelot more than a decade earlier – was well documented.

She also was a political symbol before the age of 10. Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter snubbed the capital's elite private schools to enroll Amy, whose elder brothers already were grown, at a public elementary school. Carter was only the second president after Theodore Roosevelt to enroll his child in public school.

Later, as a teenager and young adult, Amy Carter made her own waves, with multiple arrests related to protesting South African apartheid as well as the U.S. involvement in Nicaragua.

But since her youth, she has largely withdrawn from the public eye in favor of a quiet life in her home state of Georgia. She was at one point, a part-time art teacher at a private school in Atlanta, The New York Times reported.

Amy Carter has always preferred her privacy, those who knew her told the Times. Her return to Washington this week marks one of only a few moments in the spotlight in recent years.

After Rosalynn Carter's death in November 2023, Amy Carter spoke at a memorial service in Atlanta and read an emotional love letter from her father to her mother, dated 75 years earlier.

"My darling, every time I have ever been away from you, I have been thrilled when I returned to discover just how wonderful you are," she read from her father's words. "… Goodbye, darling. Until tomorrow, Jimmy."

Oldest person

Continued from Page 1A

A lifetime of honor, recognition

Lucas celebrated her 110th birthday in 2018 and received an apostolic blessing from Pope Francis, as well as a certificate, LongeviQuest reported.

She has been recognized multiple times for her age, including:

- Jan. 2, 2022 – Oldest Brazilian ecclesiastical person ever.
- Jan. 23, 2022 – Oldest documented living person in Brazil.
- July 30, 2022 – Oldest validated living person in South and Latin America.
- Feb. 16, 2024 – Brazil's oldest living person.
- Feb. 22, 2024 – Oldest living person in the Americas and the world's third oldest living person.
- Aug. 19, 2024 – World's second oldest living person.
- Dec. 29, 2024 – World's oldest living person.

Lucas is also the second oldest nun in documented history, coming only after Lucile Randon or Sister André of France, who died in January 2023 at 118 years and 340 days old.

According to LongeviQuest, Lucas is also the last known living person born in 1908.

Nun began her life of faith at 16

Lucas was born in São Francisco de Assis, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, on June 8, 1908, according to LongeviQuest. The organization said her date of birth was originally reported as May 27, 1908, but researchers have found her date of birth was most likely 11 days later.

The 116-year-old had a somber beginning as she was so skinny, that many people thought she wouldn't survive childhood, LongeviQuest wrote on its website.

Lucas, who is the great-granddaughter of General David Canabarro, a Ragamuffin War leader, was 16 years old when she began studying at the Santa Teresa de Jesus boarding school in Santana do Livramento, Rio Grande do Sul, according to LongeviQuest.

Inah Canabarro Lucas, 116, is now the world's oldest person after the death of Tomiko Itooka of Japan. PROVIDED BY CARLOS MACEDO/LONGEVIQUEST

At 17 years old, she was baptized in Santana do Livramento. She later moved to Montevideo, Uruguay, to be confirmed in the Catholic Church on Oct. 1, 1929, at 21 years old. She returned to Brazil the next year to teach Portuguese and mathematics at a school in Tijuca, a Rio de Janeiro neighborhood, LongeviQuest reported.

She renewed her vows for the first time three years later in Rio de Janeiro, then again in 1933.

In July 1934, at 26 years old, Lucas took her perpetual vows and officially became a nun, according to LongeviQuest. Throughout her life, she has worked as a teacher, a professor and a secretary. She retired in 1995, the organization said.

In addition to her religion, Lucas also has a passion for soccer, LongeviQuest said, calling her "a devoted supporter of Sport Club Internacional."

"Whether rich or poor, it doesn't matter – it's for the people," she said in a news release on LongeviQuest's website.

As for her living so long, Lucas said it was nothing but the Lord.

"He is the secret of life," she said. "He is the secret of everything."

Death row inmates reject clemency

Two among 37 prisoners commuted by Biden

N'dea Yancey-Bragg
USA TODAY

Two of the 37 people on federal death row whose sentences were commuted last month are trying to block President Joe Biden's clemency action.

Shannon Wayne Agofsky, who was sentenced to death in 2004 in the killing of a fellow prisoner in Texas, and Len Davis, a former Louisiana police officer who was sentenced in 2005 for ordering the killing of a woman after she filed a complaint against him at the New Orleans Police Department, filed emergency petitions late last month to prevent their sentences from being commuted to life in prison without parole.

"The defendant never requested commutation. The defendant never filed for commutation," Agofsky wrote in his filing. "The defendant does not want commutation, and refused to sign the papers offered with the commutation."

Agofsky, initially imprisoned for another murder that occurred when he was 18, according to The Death Penalty Information Center, said in court document that he has been working "tirelessly" to establish his innocence in the original case and challenge his death sentence, arguing those charges were filed in a "multiplicitous and unconstitutional way."

"The defendant does not want commutation, and refused to sign the papers offered with the commutation."
Shannon Wayne Agofsky
Death row inmate

"To commute his sentence now, while the defendant has active litigation in court, is to strip him of the protection of heightened scrutiny. This constitutes an undue burden, and leaves the defendant in a position of fundamental unfairness, which would decimate his pending appellate procedures," Agofsky wrote.

Laura Agofsky told NBC News her husband had refused to request a presidential commutation because he was able to seek legal counsel that is crucial to his appeals.

"He doesn't want to die in prison being labeled a cold-blooded killer," Laura Agofsky told the outlet.

Meanwhile, Davis said in his filing that he "has always maintained his innocence and argued that federal court had no jurisdiction to try him for civil rights offenses." He claimed that being sentenced to death would draw attention to "overwhelming misconduct" committed by the Justice Department.

Both men said they refused to sign paperwork for their commutations. But legally their consent is not required because the Supreme Court ruled in 1927 that the president can commute a death sentence without an inmate's consent.

"While it's understandable that Mr. Davis and Mr. Agofsky may have concerns about what will happen next in their cases, their objections will have no legal effect," Robin M. Maher, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center, said in a statement to USA TODAY. "The president's power to commute their death sentences is grounded in his constitutional authority and is absolute."

Biden commuted the sentences of nearly every inmate on federal death row last month, which the White House called the largest single-day of clemency actions in modern history.

The list of commutations excluded Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, who was convicted in the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013 that killed three people and injured more than 260; Robert Bowers, who was convicted in the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue mass shooting in Pittsburgh that killed 11 people; and Dylann Roof, who was convicted in the 2015 mass shooting at an African American church in Charleston, South Carolina, in which nine people were killed.

Contributing: Francesca Chambers and Gabe Hauari

Trump is determined to get Greenland and Panama Canal

President-elect cites economy, security

Josh Meyer
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Why is President-elect Donald Trump so committed to acquiring Greenland and the Panama Canal that he'd be willing to use military coercion to get them?

The short answer is that Trump is jockeying for geopolitical supremacy over what he believes are an expansionist-minded China and Russia, two former top Trump national security aides told USA TODAY.

But Trump's concerns also are heavily influenced by something he often does not acknowledge: climate change and its growing influence on national security.

Trump has had his eyes on the massive but remote Arctic island since his first term. He doubled down on that – and his interest in the coast-to-coast Central American waterway that is the Panama Canal – in recent weeks as he prepares to take office.

On Tuesday, Trump went even further, refusing to rule out either military or economic coercion when it comes to taking control of the canal, which is owned and operated by Panama, and Greenland, a self-governing territory within the Kingdom of Denmark.

"We need them for economic security," Trump said at a news conference at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida.

"The Panama Canal is vital to our country," he said at one point. At another: "We need Greenland for national security purposes."

Greenland: The key to the mythical Northwest Passage

When it comes to Greenland, Trump said he believes Denmark "should give it up, because we need it for national security. ... I'm talking about protecting the free world.

"You don't even need binoculars," Trump added. "You look outside. You have China ships all over the place. You have Russian ships all over the place. We're not letting that happen."

John Bolton, Trump's point man on Greenland in his first administration, said American political leaders have been interested in gaining control of the island for more than a century.

"Trump didn't discover Greenland," Bolton, who also was Trump's first national security adviser, said in an interview. "The U.S. has been worried about it for a long time."

To understand Trump's interest in Greenland, Bolton said, just look at a map of the world from the vantage point of the North Pole.

Four NATO countries – the U.S., Canada, Denmark and Norway – have territorial claims that cover half of the Arctic Circle, Bolton said. "Russia covers the rest."

The U.S. already has a military base in Greenland, but having more control of the entire island would enable Washington to better protect its interests in the region – including critically important shipping lanes – against expansionist efforts by Russia and, more recently, China.

China has become increasingly aggressive in the region as climate change reduces much of the impenetrable Arctic Circle ice to water, Bolton said. That makes the mythical Northwest Passage – a shorter shipping route between North America, Europe and Asia sought by explorers for 300 years – now a reality.

The gradual opening of the Northwest Passage has allowed more military and commercial ships to cross over or near the North Pole in recent years, which could reduce their voyages by thousands of miles.

"So who holds that defensive capability across the Arctic Circle is critical," Bolton said. "Especially with global warming making the famous Northwest Passage now something that's real, and with China's interest in becoming a global power."

'Who knows what's under there?'

There also is the enormous bounty of precious resources believed to be buried under the ocean floor of the Arctic Circle and on Greenland itself.

"It's never been explored. People thought it was covered with ice. But as the ice melts, just like the Russian tundra, who knows what's under there?" Bolton said.

In his first administration, Trump administration officials believed Greenland could have critically important rare-earth resources that were now becoming harvestable thanks to ice melt driven by climate change.

President-elect Donald Trump makes remarks at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Fla., on Tuesday.
CARLOS BARRIA/REUTERS

Recovering them would make the U.S. far less reliant on China, which has much of the world's stores of such materials used in computers, cellphones and other high-tech devices, according to Bolton and a second administration official, Charles Kupperman.

"I'm not an expert on that, but that's why we do have a clear national security interest there," Bolton said.

Panama Canal: 'China is basically taking it over'

On Tuesday, Trump criticized former President Jimmy Carter for ceding control of the Panama Canal to the Panamanian government even though the U.S. spent vast sums of money and manpower to build the 51-mile waterway out of a mosquito-infested swamp.

Over the years, Trump said, China has virtually taken control of the waterway, giving Beijing a huge economic and military advantage over Washington.

"We gave it away for $1, but the deal was that, you know, they have to treat us fairly. They don't treat us fairly. They charge more for our ships than they charge for ships of other countries. They charge more for our Navy than they charge for navies of other countries," Trump said Tuesday.

Trump also claimed the biggest beneficiary of that is China, which he said, "is basically taking it over."

"China is running the Panama Canal," Trump said, adding that it "makes a lot of money from one of the most profitable structures ever built, because you have ships lined up back to Florida, frankly, and they just keep going through, and the numbers are staggering, half a million to a million dollars a ship."

Trump didn't mention it, but the reason for the backlog is climate change.

According to a United Nations report from February, transits through the Canal "have plummeted 49 percent compared to its peak, due to dwindling water levels as a result of a severe, climate-change-induced drought."

'It's our canal, we paid for it, and Carter got rid of it'

Kupperman, deputy national security adviser in the first Trump administration, agreed that China's massive investment in canal infrastructure could pose a security threat to the U.S.

"The Chinese definitely have a strategy to create a large presence in the Western Hemisphere. And it's not just in Panama; it's throughout South America and other places as well," he told USA TODAY.

More U.S. control or influence over the canal would not only help the incoming Trump administration counter China's efforts to expand its influence throughout the Western Hemisphere, but it would benefit the U.S. in global trade leverage and military strategy, Kupperman and Bolton said.

Kupperman first worked on Panama Canal issues for Ronald Reagan's first presidential campaign in 1980.

Reagan, he said, defeated Carter in part by attacking his agreement to give control of the Canal to Panama.

"He said it's our canal, we paid for it and Carter got rid of it," Kupperman said. "So it was a political statement in 1980, and I think Trump's trying to resurrect the feelings that existed when the canal was first returned to Panama."

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Nurse is arrested on child abuse charge

Babies suffered fractures in neonatal ICU in Va.

Natalie Neysa Alund
USA TODAY

A Virginia woman has been arrested on charges including child abuse after more than a half-dozen babies suffered fractures during a span of more than a year at the Virginia neonatal intensive care unit where she previously worked.

Erin Elizabeth Ann Strotman, 26, is charged with malicious wounding and felony child abuse in connection to an ongoing local and state investigation at Henrico Doctors' Hospital in Richmond, the Henrico County Police Division said.

Strotman was employed as a nurse when one of the newborns was injured at the hospital on Nov. 10, said Shannon Taylor, the Henrico County commonwealth's attorney.

"While there has been an arrest for one person for allegedly inflicting injury on a single victim, I would emphasize this is an ongoing investigation spanning potential offenses committed in both 2023 and 2024," Taylor told USA TODAY.

Henrico County Sheriff's Office records show Strotman was booked early Friday into the jail , where she remained without bond Tuesday. She was arraigned on the charges and is slated to appear in court on the charges March 24.

Strotman's court-appointed attorney, Scott Cardani, declined to comment to USA TODAY on Tuesday.

Three babies with fractures, similar to 2023 incident

The hospital said in a statement on Christmas Eve that its employees in late November and December discovered three babies in its NICU had unexplained fractures, "similar to an incident involving four babies in the summer of 2023."

"We initiated a thorough internal investigation, informed the families and notified the proper authorities and regulatory agencies and worked collaboratively with them on their investigations," the hospital wrote in the statement.

Two days later, on Dec. 26, law enforcement opened their investigation, with police saying they were made aware of an internal investigation involving the NICU. On Dec. 31, police reported that previously closed cases related to the incidents had been reopened as part of the recent broader investigation involving babies injured dating back to 2023.

In a separate statement released Friday, the hospital confirmed the ongoing investigation into fractures sustained by patients in its NICU.

"This morning, the Henrico County Police Department arrested a former employee of the hospital in connection with that investigation," the hospital said in its updated statement.

"We are both shocked and saddened by this development in the investigation and are focused on continuing to care for our patients and providing support to our colleagues who have been deeply and personally impacted by this investigation," the hospital wrote.

So far, woman is charged in only one incident

As of Tuesday, Strotman has been charged in connection to one incident on Nov. 10, Henrico County police spokesperson Karina Bolster told USA TODAY, but detectives were also looking at similar injuries with other babies in the NICU.

"Due to the sensitive nature of this investigation we're not able to release specifics on the number of victims/injuries/what unfolded," Bolster said.

The Virginia State Police, the Virginia Health Department, Child Protective Services, and the Attorney General's Office are also investigating.

Who is Erin Strotman?

Police say Strotman is from Chesterfield County, south of Richmond.

The hospital described Strotman as a former employee in a statement posted on its website, but did not say how long she worked there.

Strotman received her nursing license in May 2019, and her certification remained active online as of Tuesday, according to the Virginia Department of Health Professions.

The hospital said it isn't accepting any more babies to their NICU.

"For babies needing NICU care, we will assess them, stabilize, and facilitate a transfer to an appropriate facility, once available," the hospital wrote. It also said it "has taken immediate steps to enhance safety measures."

Police reexamine 2023 and 2024 child injury cases

Henrico police Chief Eric D. English said detectives combed through "hundreds of hours of footage" before arresting Strotman. Police said they were reviewing dozens of videos and "reexamining the 2023 and 2024 cases as part of this broader investigation."

If convicted of the felony charges and sentenced consecutively, Taylor said, Strotman faces up to 30 years in prison.

Antifa

Continued from Page 1A

movement and resorting to civil disobedience and property damage to protest law enforcement's treatment of people of color.

Now, as Trump enters a second term, activists find themselves facing down a new paradigm in which they say a leader they already opposed has shifted ever further toward the far right.

To understand what anti-fascists have planned for the coming months and years under Trump, USA TODAY interviewed more than a dozen self-proclaimed Antifa activists from across the country, in addition to experts and academics who study the movement.

What emerged was a picture of active resistance, simmering anger and readiness for battle, if and when the time comes. Anti-fascists universally despise Trump as a full-blown fascist, worrying he will enact draconian and authoritarian policies that trample on the rule of law and civil rights. If he does, they say, they're ready to take action – whether with civil disobedience, protests, even violence.

Anti-fascists across America worry the Trump administration will almost immediately begin to enforce policies targeting three groups: immigrants, the transgender community and women.

Trump communications director Steven Cheung cast scorn on antifascist activists who are criticizing the president-elect.

"These disturbed individuals clearly suffer from a debilitating and serious case of Trump Derangement Syndrome that has rotted their brains to the core, forcing them to live in an alternate reality devoid of truth or common sense," Cheung said. "President Trump won a historic election with a massive mandate because the American people clearly support his America First policies that will unite the country after the four years of disastrous and failed leadership from Democrats."

Anti-fascists and experts on extremism also foresee a new rise in America's extremist groups under Trump.

Buoyed by promised pardons of their brethren for their Jan. 6 crimes and by Trump's embrace of popular extremist far-right figures, those groups will likely see a resurgence after January, experts said. Anti-fascists say if that happens they will protect their neighborhoods from their sworn enemies, fighting on the streets again if necessary.

What distinguishes the extreme far left from the far right, however, is an abhorrence for meaningless violence, death and terrorism – at least against people, anti-fascists and experts on the movement told USA TODAY.

The Antifa activists who spoke with USA TODAY all said they decry acts of terror like mass shootings or targeted attacks like the murder of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson last month. Acts of mass violence are the province of neo-Nazis, misogynists, incels and other far-right extremists, the activists said – not Antifa.

But several anti-fascists did not rule out acts of future violence by disenfranchised, politically disgruntled self-proclaimed Antifa acting as "lone wolves."

"If Trump really aspires to the kind of authoritarianism that many people fear he would like to, historically, dictatorship and authoritarianism can push people into violent action," said Mark Bray, a lecturer in history at Rutgers University and author of "Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook." "That has happened in the past, and we are potentially moving into uncharted waters."

Javed Ali, senior director for counterterrorism at the National Security Council in 2017 and 2018 during the first Trump administration, said he's also concerned about a possible rise in terrorism and violence from disgruntled actors on the far left. Antifa activists may claim to be nonviolent, but in times of political stress the movement has not shied away from violence, he said.

"I think we we're going to have to wait and see how it plays out – if these immigration enforcement operations truly are terrible and start to look like the Japanese internment camps of the 1940s," Ali said. "Will that provide the spark to someone who then springs into action? Maybe."

Peaceful but ready to act

Anti-fascists in America see themselves, and their allies, as under attack from Trump and his Make America Great Again movement.

From the looming specter of Project 2025 – a policy blueprint drafted in part by white supremacists that Antifa believe threatens vulnerable communities across the country – to Trump's open embrace of conspiracy theories like the Great Replacement, anti-fascists said they're desperately worried about where the country is headed.

But that doesn't mean Antifa is about to storm the streets.

A recent article on the anti-fascist website It's Going Down sums up what anti-fascists told USA TODAY in interviews: "Don't Panic, Organize: Meeting the Moment of Trump's Second Term," reads like a blueprint for Antifa organizing in the first months of the new Trump term.

"Bring the energy from the streets back home by getting organized and building power in everyday institutions of social life," it reads. "This might mean organizing a union at work, a tenant union at your apartment complex, an assembly in your neighborhood, or a student organization at school."

Though many people's stereotype of Antifa is defined by violent black-clad protesters breaking windows and setting fire to police cruisers, the reality of the anti-fascist movement is far more mundane, said Stanislav Vysotsky, a professor of criminology and author of the book "American Antifa."

Antifa activists typically spend most of their time organizing, raising money and researching and exposing white supremacists and other far-right actors in their local area, Vysotsky said.

"The thing I'm hearing primarily from anarchist and anti-fascist voices is about working with communities, providing communities with support, building mutual-aid networks that they've been establishing for a while now, trying to use those as a base to weather the coming storm," he said.

This sort of organizing and resistance goes only so far, however.

Anti-fascists told USA TODAY they are willing to stay in their corner, helping the people around them, unless and until their friends and communities

Daryle Lamont Jenkins leads the One People's Project, an anti-fascist research and media organization.
ANNE-MARIE CARUSO/USA TODAY NETWORK

start to feel the federal government is directly targeting them.

Building resistant communities and networks to support them is one aspect of anti-fascism. But another key element of the movement is not ignoring attacks on those communities.

What action Antifa takes when those policies go into place isn't clear. Most of the Antifa activists interviewed for this story talked in terms of "lines being crossed" or gauntlets being thrown that could lead to protests and more. But those lines, and those gauntlets, differ depending on whom is asked.

History offers some guidance, however.

Anti-fascist activism is typically reactive, said Mark Pitcavage, a senior research fellow at the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism. Rather than organizing large-scale protests against Trump – something Pitcavage said he doubts Antifa has the numbers to do – anti-fascists will likely hunker down unless they are provoked into action, he said.

"It's certainly possible that you can have pro-Trump groups of various kinds, holding events, holding public actions at colleges or other places, that Antifa would want to respond to and react and show up for," Pitcavage said.

The Black Lives Matter protests, launched after the murder of George Floyd, marked a rising up of the far left that was unparalleled in modern times, Vysotsky and others said. Though the vast majority of those protesters weren't active anti-fascists, the crowds were strengthened by Antifa organizers, cells and foot soldiers, he said.

An incident like Floyd's murder could galvanize the far left into action again, Vysotsky said, but the ignition could also come from elsewhere.

"It's hard to predict – it's hard to be aware of what the outrage might be, in terms of what might spark mass demonstrations around the country," Vysotsky said. "Probably my best prediction would be a coordinated attempt at mass deportation – because that's going to mobilize people."

Anti-fascists agreed.

A highly visible campaign of deportations – particularly one that makes incursions into communities that have given refuge to migrants lacking permanent legal status – could spark mass protests and more, Jenkins and other Antifa activists told USA TODAY.

"There is only so much that people will take – they're not going to have their lives uprooted in the name of politics," Jenkins said. "It's the kids in cages talk – we all know that phrase 'Putting kids in cages,' but when it's your kid they're coming for and they're coming into your neighborhood, that's when things change."

Trump has said on numerous occasions that he believes Antifa is a terrorist organization and should be designated as such.

Legally, that's tricky.

The United States doesn't have a domestic terrorism law under which Antifa could be designated. But anti-fascists are aware of the president-elect's animosity toward them, and they are concerned Trump will try to use the full power of federal law enforcement agencies against them.

"Laws will have to be adhered to, and if they're not adhered to, then we're just going to have to figure out what to do after that," Jenkins said. "Because if they aren't adhered to, then that means we have just entered into another chapter in this country's life – in this country's history."

Antifa has also come under significant fire from state prosecutors in recent years. A groundbreaking case in San Diego last year saw two defendants found guilty of charges of conspiracy to riot stemming from their activities as part of an anti-fascist coalition that squared off against Trump supporters at a 2021 rally.

Anti-fascists across the country told USA TODAY they're concerned federal and state prosecutors will target the movement. That means they have to be careful about organizing, engaging in what Antifa calls "OpSec," or operations security.

But experts in domestic terrorism, and anti-fascists themselves, are less worried about the threat from organized Antifa than they are about loose cannons or "lone wolves" within their ranks.

Fears of terror attacks

Since 1990, the biggest threat to American lives from domestic terrorism has come from the far right, according to a study last year by the National Institutes of Justice.

White supremacists and neo-Nazis have killed dozens of people in mass shootings, bombings and assassinations. But as the national political power structure shifts sharply to the right, experts in terrorism have begun to worry about a new threat: disgruntled anti-fascists who decide to take matters into their own hands.

"I do think there is a strong possibility of a resurgence," said Ali, the former Trump administration counterterrorism official. "It wouldn't surprise me that there are people that are going to be angry at Trump, that are going to be angry at the policies, and beyond being angry – a smaller set may go out actually trying to engage in violent action."

Anti-fascists stressed that random, or even targeted, acts of violence – especially mass violence – simply aren't in the tactics used by their movement. Mass shootings and bombings are the province of the far right, several Antifa activists told USA TODAY, and they don't foresee leftist terrorists committing such acts.

"The violence from the radical left has been, you know, punches to the face for the most part," Bray said. "So I don't really see it happening."

OPINION

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Jimmy Carter's leadership saved refugees

Sophal Ear
Opinion contributor

Sophal Ear, as a toddler with his siblings and his widowed mother, center, in the late 1970s, when they were Cambodian refugees in Vietnam. FAMILY PHOTO

On April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh, and my family's world was upended. My father, who ran a small pharmacy, succumbed to dysentery and malnutrition in one of the regime's labor camps. My mother, left a widow with five children, faced an impossible choice: Stay and die, or risk everything to flee.

The Khmer Rouge announced that Vietnamese people in Cambodia could return to Vietnam – a proclamation many believed to be a trap. But my mother saw a glimmer of hope.

She faked being Vietnamese, renamed her children and coached herself tirelessly in the language. Her gamble paid off, allowing us to leave Cambodia. My mother's extraordinary courage and determination saved our lives.

Yet our journey was far from over. We made it to Vietnam but were destitute, relying on the kindness of relatives and strangers to survive. In 1978, with the help of extended family, we made our way to France. And finally, after seven years, we resettled in Oakland, California, where my siblings and I were able to go to school and rebuild our lives.

Millions of war refugees did not escape Southeast Asia

Our escape was a miracle, but I know how easily it could have gone the other way. Millions of Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese war refugees were not as fortunate.

By the late 1970s, the refugee crisis had become one of the greatest humanitarian disasters of the 20th century. Regional camps were overcrowded and underfunded, while nations hesitated to intervene.

But one man refused to look away.

In 1979, during a demonstration organized by Sue Morton – who later founded Refugees International – President Jimmy Carter told the protesters outside the White House, "I cannot let your people die."

Those six words were a turning point for countless families like mine.

Carter's leadership during the refugee crisis galvanized the United States to resettle nearly 200,000 refugees. For many, it was the difference between life and death. His actions saved lives, including those of my extended family, who joined us in America years later.

The candlelight vigil wasn't just a moment of moral clarity; it was also the beginning of a movement. Refugees International was born out of this moment, dedicated to amplifying the voices of displaced people and advocating for their rights.

Today, as a member of its board, I'm honored to carry forward the mission inspired by the leadership and compassion of Jimmy Carter, who died Dec. 29 at the age of 100. The former president's funeral will take place at the Washington National Cathedral on Thursday.

President Carter's legacy was further enshrined in 1980, when he signed the Refugee Act into law. This groundbreaking legislation created a framework for the United States to offer protection to those fleeing persecution, setting a global standard for humanitarian response. It remains one of the most significant achievements in America's refugee policy.

For me, Carter's legacy is deeply personal. Without his leadership, countless refugee families like mine might not have survived. His compassion gave us not just a second chance but a future. My journey – from a baby my mother once thought she might have to give away, to a scholar, advocate and board member of Refugees International – was part of Carter's decision to act when so many hesitated.

Carter's legacy isn't just history – it is a beacon of hope

Today, more than 120 million people around the world are displaced, and Carter's legacy offers an urgent reminder: Refugees are not statistics. They are families like mine – mothers, fathers and children fleeing unimaginable horrors, in search of safety and hope.

President Carter's actions during Southeast Asia's refugee crisis remain a model for what is possible when leaders rise to meet moral challenges with clarity and resolve. His legacy continues to guide Refugees International's work, inspiring us to advocate for those whose voices are often unheard.

"I cannot let your people die."

Those words didn't just save lives in the past; they serve as a call to action for the present and future.

As we honor President Carter's extraordinary life, let us recommit to the values of compassion and justice that he so deeply embodied.

For those of us who owe our lives to his leadership, his legacy isn't just history – it is a beacon of hope that reminds us of the power of humanity in the face of crisis.

Sophal Ear, associate professor at the Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University, is a Refugees International board member.

Again? Trump fumes over half-staff flags honoring Carter

Laurie Roberts
The Arizona Republic
USA TODAY NETWORK

The casket of former President Jimmy Carter arrives Tuesday at the U.S. Capitol, where he lies in state until his funeral on Thursday at the Washington National Cathedral. SHAWN THEW/POOL PHOTO VIA IMAGN IMAGES

Incoming President Donald Trump railed recently about the outrage that is apparently sweeping through the nation. The American flag, it seems, will be flying at half-staff when he is inaugurated on Jan. 20.

"Look at what they've done to our once GREAT America over the past four years – It's a total mess!" Trump ranted Jan. 3 on social media.

"In any event, because of the death of President Jimmy Carter, the Flag may, for the first time ever during an Inauguration of a future President, be at half mast. Nobody wants to see this, and no American can be happy about it. Let's see how it plays out."

Let's do.

Trump had a fit over half-staff flags honoring Sen. McCain

You can tell a lot about person by the way they handle symbolic gestures, those small but significant actions that signal honor and respect.

Take Trump's handling of the flag when U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., passed away.

According to federal rules, the flag must be flown at half-staff on all federal buildings, grounds and naval vessels in Washington, D.C., on the day of and the day after a senator dies.

Other presidents, however, have honored other senators who have died in office by keeping the flag at half-staff until their burials.

McCain died on a Saturday evening in 2018, and just after midnight into early Monday, the flag on the White House was hoisted back to full staff.

This, as flags at the Capitol and all over Washington, D.C., remained at half-staff in tribute to McCain.

It took no less than a national outcry, a request for military intervention and a plea by the American Legion to get then-President Trump to relent on his dramatic show of disrespect.

By mid-afternoon that Monday, the flag was returned to half-staff, where it remained through the day of McCain's interment.

It was petty and political, and the sort of signature move we came to expect of Trump 45.

Now, the flag is once again at half-staff, in tribute to former President Jimmy Carter, and it seems Trump 47 hasn't learned a thing.

President Joe Biden ordered all flags lowered for 30 days to honor Carter, as has been the custom since 1954.

The nation's 39th president died on Dec. 29, which means the flags will be at half-staff on the day that Trump becomes the nation's 47th president.

And he's pitching an absolute fit.

Who doesn't love our country? Who only thinks about himself?

"The Democrats are all 'giddy' about our magnificent American Flag potentially being at 'half mast' during my Inauguration," Trump ranted on his Truth Social media platform. "They think it's so great, and are so happy about it because, in actuality, they don't love our Country, they only think about themselves."

Says the man who clearly is thinking only about himself.

You can tell a lot about person by the way they handle symbolic gestures, those small but significant actions that signal honor and respect.

The nerve of that Jimmy Carter, to die just before Donald Trump's triumphant return to the Oval Office.

Laurie Roberts is a columnist at The Arizona Republic, where this column first appeared. Reach Roberts at laurie.roberts@arizonarepublic.com, or follow her on X (formerly Twitter) at @LaurieRobertsaz, on Threads at @LaurieRobertsaz and on BlueSky at @laurieroberts.bsky.social

USA TODAY

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Seven travel trends will shape our vacations in 2025

Everything from the destinations we choose to the activities we'll do while on vacation. **Page 3B**

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We survey and compile the top news stories from all 50 states plus Washington, D.C. **Page 4B**

Retailers, consumers brace for tariffs

Some major companies are trying to learn 'what exactly they are walking into,' one expert says

Betty Lin-Fisher
USA TODAY

What are America's top retailers talking about? Tariffs, and what they mean for them and for consumers.

That's the topic everyone was buzzing about at a Washington, D.C., event with major U.S. retailers in early December. President-elect Donald Trump's proposed tariffs on China, Canada and Mexico had, at that point, been well established.

"We exclusively talked about this topic of tariffs," Balika Sonthalia, a partner and practice leader of strategic operations, Americas, at global strategy and management consultancy firm Kearney, told USA TODAY.

In addition to immigration policies, tariffs have retailers worried that "the combination of the two can put a lot of sectors in between a rock and a hard place," she said. And with Trump repeatedly vowing tariffs are coming – and doubling down this month after the Washington Post reported he might scale them back – U.S. retailers and consumers aren't waiting to prepare.

Retailers are trying to learn "what exactly they are walking into," said Sonthalia, whose specialty for Kearney is consumer products and retail and distribution clients.

'Another form of inflation, just spelled differently'

Estimates on the impact of tariffs on consumers' wallets have been anywhere from an additional $2,500 to $7,600 a year per household, said Jonathan Gold, vice president of supply chain and customs policy for the National Retail Federation.

Consumers ultimately will pay for any tariffs that are put in place, said Darpan

See TARIFFS, Page 2B

MONEYLINE

STEVE SNOWDEN/GETTY IMAGES

'BREAKING BAD' HOUSE IS FOR SALE IN ALBUQUERQUE

Fans of "Breaking Bad" are in for a treat. The house that belonged to Walter White on the series is up for sale, local news outlet KOB-4 reported. The home, in northeast Albuquerque, will soon be listed for $4 million, the channel said, even though it boasts a "Zestimate" of about $350,000. That's because the home still draws fans of the show from all over the world, more than a decade after the series ended. When producers were scouting locations, the home was owned by Fran and Louis Padilla, who had bought it in 1973. The home's interior was used only for staging and for storing gear. Scenes were filmed in its exterior, the KOB report said. Daughter Joanne Quintana thinks the buyer should turn it into a museum or shrine to the show.

WOMAN ARRESTED TWICE FOR ALLEGED TRESPASSING

A woman was arrested for the second time in a week at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, days after allegedly boarding a Delta Air Lines flight without a ticket. The Port of Seattle Police Department was dispatched on Friday to help the Transportation Security Administration with a person "considered not to have official airport business," an airport spokesperson told USA TODAY in an email. A police report identified her as Shemaiah Small, 33. Small could not be reached for comment on the allegations at the phone number listed. The incident came days after she allegedly boarded a Delta Air Lines flight to Honolulu without a boarding pass Dec. 24.

TAIWAN INTRODUCES DIGITAL NOMAD VISA

Taiwan has introduced its first digital nomad visa, allowing eligible foreign remote workers to live and work on the island for up to six months. Taiwan also plans to roll out programs to further incentivize digital nomads, such as investment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Only citizens from visa-exempt countries, including the U.S., can apply for the visa. There are certain conditions to qualify, one of which is that you've received a digital nomad visa from another country. There also are requirements based on your age and income, according to visa guidelines.

SAM YEH/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Many Fort Wilderness guests decorate their golf carts, not just at the holidays. PHOTOS BY EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

Fort Wilderness offers camping at Disney World

Eve Chen USA TODAY

The cheapest place to stay at Walt Disney World isn't a hotel. ● It's a tent or pop-up trailer at Disney's Fort Wilderness, a sprawling resort with campsites and cabins near Magic Kingdom. ● With fully equipped campsites, plenty of nearby restrooms, on-site dining, and loads of outdoor recreation, Fort Wilderness makes camping easy even for first-timers.

Fellow campers who decorate their campsites and golf carts and "pixie dust" guests with treats add to the charm. But camping is not for everyone, and there are costs to consider beyond nightly rates, as my family discovered firsthand.

Here's what you should know about camping at Disney World.

How much is Fort Wilderness?

Campsite prices vary by date and type. The cheapest option is a tent or pop-up campsite. Larger RVs require different, more expensive sites. You can also pay for premium locations.

One way to find the cheapest rates is to look for dates with the lowest starting price for single-day theme park tickets, which you can find on Walt Disney World's website. This year, those dates include Aug. 25 through 28 and Sept. 9 through 11. On those dates, the nondiscounted price for a tent pop-up campsite is $73 per night. A "Stay Longer and Save More" promotion available for most dates from May 1 through Sept. 30 brings the starting price down further to just over $62 per night with a one-night minimum stay.

We paid $113 for our tent site over the holidays, a popular time at the resort.

How much does it cost to camp?

It depends on how much gear you have. Fort Wilderness does not rent tents or campers, but RVs are available to rent from third parties. I bought a new tent, two new air mattresses, and a new sleeping bag, which totaled $114. Combine that with the $113 I paid for the campsite and that would have been more than enough for a hotel room with actual beds for the night.

You can save money on meals by cooking while camping. There's a charcoal grill at each campsite. I brought a few snacks, including s'mores fixings, from home, but we decided to dine at Trail's End, an onsite

See CAMPING, Page 2B

Our tent wasn't big enough for our whole family, so my husband car-camped instead.

Nine apps to help balance goals

These can help you make 2025 successful

Jennifer Jolly
Special to USA TODAY

So, what's it going to be this year? Are you vowing to work less and exercise more? Prioritize your overall health and relationships with your family? Or maybe you resolve to stop making New Year's resolutions. Most of them fail miserably, after all.

As soon the Champagne bubbles settle in the wee hours of Jan. 1, the reality sinks in: It's 2025, and we need to be just as productive, organized and centered as ever. But do we really expect this year, and more importantly, this year's resolutions, to be any different from years past?

Whether you promise to meditate more, streamline your workdays, or find a creative outlet to let your brain soar, these apps can help you make 2025 the year you achieve your dreams.

Zen and the art of a balanced life

It's always a good idea to head into the new year with a collective exhale. I use the Headspace app for my must-have meditation sessions, and it's perfect for those moments when life feels like a blender going full tilt without a lid. It's not just cross-legged "*ommm*"-style meditations, either; Headspace now has active meditations for mindful movement and podcasts, too.

My favorites are the meditations tailored to anxiety and self-esteem, which are serious lifesavers during my most hectic weeks. You get two weeks of Headspace for free, and the annual subscription is $70 for an entire year. That's a small price to pay for peace of mind in 2025.

Sweating is a boon for stress relief, too. That glowing feeling you get after a nice workout session is hard to beat, but I don't always have an hour to jog through the hills – in fact, when I'm traveling, there are rarely any hills at all.

FitOn is my go-to when I need an exercise routine that fits my life because I can grab anything from a quick 10-minute ab-crusher to a relaxing yoga sesh I can do in my hotel room.

You can try the app for free, but if you want to level up with meal plans and bonus features, the Pro version is reasonable at $40/year.

It's probably apparent by now that I don't have a ton of extra time on my hands. An ultra-busy lifestyle doesn't mesh well with reading books, but I make it work with Blinkist. It's an app that digests nonfiction books and serves you 15-minute summaries. Think of it like CliffsNotes but for adulthood. I fold laundry and get productivity hacks and leadership tips from the top thinkers of our day. Works for me.

Another app that works to "read" books is Libby. If you have a library card, you can check out audiobooks and e-books for free all year. I'm listening to a great one now, "You Dreamed of Empires" by Álvaro Enrigue (highly recommend), and doing it via Libby saves a ton of money versus buying each title from Apple Bookstore at

See APPS, Page 2B

Tariffs

Continued from Page 1B

Seth, CEO of Nextuple, which helps build and support programs to help its clients get products for consumers in stores or online. The firm's client list includes major U.S. retailers like Dick's Sporting Goods and luxury brands such as Kate Spade and Coach.

"For consumers, tariffs are like another form of inflation, just spelled differently," Seth said. "They have the same effect of rising prices."

Some consumers are going to delay major purchases or make smaller repairs if prices go up for imported goods from certain countries, he said. For example, a consumer "may want to do a quick fix instead of trying to change the carburetor in your car," Seth said.

Retailers dealing with tariffs will have no choice in the short term but to increase prices, Seth said.

US retailers are worried about tariffs

There's a lot of concern among retailers represented by the National Retail Federation, which includes both large and small businesses, Gold said.

"There's so much complexity in the supply chain and so many challenges in the supply chain as it is, to have something as big as these massive tariffs, is really causing disruption in itself and folks trying to figure out 'What am I supposed to do?'" Gold said.

Since there are several different scenarios of tariffs being discussed, retailers are trying to come up with plans to address them all, he said.

There are threats of a universal baseline tariff of 10% to 20% on everyone and everything, Gold said. There is also a China-specific tariff, which is 60% to 100%, he said. There are also new threats to 25% tariff on Canada and Mexico and 10% on China over immigration and fentanyl, Gold said.

How will tariffs impact consumers?

A study from the retail federation looked at the estimated impacts of the tariffs on six consumer product categories: apparel, toys, furniture, household appliances, footwear and travel goods.

Retailers rely heavily on imported products and manufacturing components to offer customers a variety of products, Gold said. A tariff is a tax paid by the U.S. importer, not by a foreign country or the exporter, he added.

The retail federation said while some U.S. manufacturers could benefit from the tariffs, the gains to U.S. producers and the Treasury from tariff revenue do not outweigh overall losses to consumers.

According to the retail federation, some examples of potential price increases with tariffs include:

- A $40 toaster oven would cost consumers $48 to $52.
- A $50 pair of athletic shoes would cost $59 to $64.
- A $2,000 mattress and box spring set would end up costing $2,128 to $2,190.

Higher prices and loss of spending power would hit low-income families especially hard, the retail federation said in its study, released on Nov. 4.

Gold said while the retail federation looked at six specific categories, he also believes pricing for consumer electronics, pet products, children's products and groceries, could be hit hard by the proposed tariffs.

How are US retailers reacting and preparing for tariffs?

Some retailers are looking at sourcing differently while others are putting in contingency plans, said Neil Saunders, a retail analyst at the research and analytics firm GlobalData.

The retail federation's retail members are trying to prepare for the best – and worst-case scenarios, Gold said.

Larger U.S. retailers have more ability to "mitigate and shift their sourcing," Gold said.

He added those shifts can't happen overnight. Smaller mom-and-pop stores and medium-sized retailers don't have as much flexibility, he said. There's even worry the tariffs might cause some smaller retailers to go out of business, Gold said.

There have already been signs that consumers and retailers reacted to potential price increases and tariffs. According to the Wall Street Journal, some retailers during Black Friday ran advertisements for things like electronics, washing machines and refrigerators before prices increase due to tariffs. Seth said sales figures from Black Friday and Cyber Monday have shown that purchases in those categories went up.

Price increases are coming for consumers

Larger retailers also warned consumers will pay higher prices with tariffs, Gold said. Price increases for consumers will be dependent on how quickly tariffs go into effect.

A spokesperson for Walmart declined to comment, but in an interview with CNBC in early November before the election, Walmart Chief Financial Officer John David Rainey said the retailer may have to raise prices on some items if Trump's proposed tariffs take effect.

"Our model is everyday low prices," he said in the interview. "But there probably will be cases where prices will go up for consumers."

Dollar Tree executives, in a December earnings call, said the price of the store's products may increase again because of tariffs. The discount retailer also said, as previously reported in USA TODAY, that proposed tariffs could also change what products consumers could find at Dollar Tree. The media relations department for Gap, which also includes Old Navy, Banana Republic and Athleta, did not respond to a request for comment.

Sonthalia said retailers at the Washington meeting she attended said they could absorb costs by implementing some cost-efficiency and pricing strategies if tariffs were up to 10%. Otherwise, costs would be passed to consumers, she said.

Gold said even if the tariffs don't go into effect, "just the threat alone is causing a little bit of chaos within the supply chain." There's also the threat of another port strike this month, he said.

Saunders said some retailers think the tariffs might be just a Trump negotiating tool.

Sonthalia, whose clients include Fortune 15 companies and small and independent retailers across all sectors, including food, pharmacy, electronics and apparel, believes "the tariffs are definitely coming."

"It's a question of to what degree," she said.

Consumers don't want to pay prices for goods made in the USA

Consumers are price-conscious and don't want to pay what it would cost to manufacture many of the items they want in the U.S., said Lauren Beitelspacher, a professor in the marketing division of Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Manufacturing for many goods in the United States is expensive because costs are high for labor, production and building facilities, said Beitelspacher, who studies the retail industry. Moving manufacturing to the U.S. would cause prices to "skyrocket," she said.

"Consumers have a reference price of what they're willing to pay for something and if it goes over that reference price, then they really question if they need it, especially if it's something that's a nonessential good," Beitelspacher said.

The U.S. also does not have some of the raw materials for some products like silks, which may be sourced overseas, so those import costs would be expensive, she said.

Companies can't make changes to manufacturing quickly

Besides, many retailers make business decisions six to 12 months in advance, Gold said. They can't afford to wait until Trump takes office to make a choice.

Still, retailers and suppliers learned through Trump's previous administration they needed to be more nimble in their supply chains, said Gold. Relying solely on China wasn't an option, he said. Tariffs could be "a useful part of the toolbox when talking about trade policy," Gold said. But it can't be the only tool, he added.

Overall, the situation is complicated, Gold said.

Plus, "It's not easy to move your supply chain. It takes months, if not years to be able to do that," Gold said.

Moves to other countries could affect product quality and more

The quality of consumer goods could also be impacted as businesses look to other countries – which might have different labor, safety and quality standards – for their manufacturing needs, Beitelspacher said.

That said, the new business due to Trump's tariffs could be an opportunity for economic growth for some developing nations, said Beitelspacher.

But, there is also a possibility that some overbooked manufacturing facilities in some countries may outsource some excess production – without the knowledge of the retailer – to what Beitelspacher called "unauthorized facilities."

Camping

Continued from Page 1B

restaurant, for our main meals. Whole pizzas start at $20.99 and family meals with a shareable entree and three sides start at $28.99.

Golf cart rentals also cost extra but are not required. I paid $70 for a one-day rental. The resort also offers free internal buses.

What's included in the Campsites at Fort Wilderness?

"Each campsite is equipped with privacy-enhancing landscaping, water, cable television and electrical hookups, a picnic table and a charcoal grill. Most campsites also include a sewer hook-up, and some even permit pets," according to Disney World's website. Pets are not permitted in tents or pop-up trailers.

There are clean public restrooms with private shower stalls, called comfort stations, within footsteps of every campsite. There's also free parking, free internal bus transportation, and free ferry and bus transportation to the parks and Disney Springs shopping, dining and entertainment complex.

Free recreational offerings include pools, playgrounds, trails, Chip 'n' Dale's Campfire Singalong, movies under the stars, and visiting Disney's horse stables, Tri-Circle-D Ranch. Guests can also play checkers and trade pins at the Fort's two Trading Post shops. Horseback riding, wagon or carriage rides, fishing, bike rentals, archery, and the long-running Hoop-Dee-Doo Musical Revue dinner show are available for a fee.

Guests also get free early entry to all four Disney World theme parks and new this year, free entry to a Disney water park on their check-in date.

Chip 'n' Dale's Campfire Singalong is a must for families with young kids, but fun for all ages. PHOTOS BY EVE CHEN/USA TODAY

Internal buses shuttle guests around the resort.

What's it like to camp at Disney World?

Our experience was a mix of magic and misery, to no fault of Fort Wilderness.

Every cast member we encountered was lovely. Our family loved Chip 'n' Dale's Campfire Singalong. It's such a treat seeing characters outside of the parks and character dining venues. We enjoyed driving our rented golf cart around, admiring fellow guests' decorations and placing trinkets in holiday stockings they'd put out for their kids. We also took part in an unofficial scavenger hunt initiated by fellow guests. There is a real sense of community at the Fort.

But we didn't sleep well. Our campsite was right next to a bus stop and comfort station. Even though fellow guests are generally respectful, it was noisier than we would have liked. It was also cold, with lows in the 40s. All the blankets I'd packed couldn't compare to a climate-controlled hotel room. Worst of all, one of our air mattresses deflated early on, and my youngest and I wound up sleeping on the hard ground.

Who shouldn't camp at Fort Wilderness?

If you don't like camping, you're probably not going to like camping at Fort Wilderness, even with all its conveniences and perks.

It also would be tough to tent camp if you aren't driving a car to Disney World, though theoretically, you could check your gear in on a plane. You can still stay in Fort Wilderness, though, in a cabin or third-party rented RV. Our family has previously stayed in the cabins and would do that again.

Can you drive to Fort Wilderness without staying there?

Generally, you can't park at Disney World resort hotels unless you're staying there or have some sort of reservation, such as dining or recreation. However, you can take free resort transportation to the Fort to enjoy its activities.

Are they getting rid of the cabins at Fort Wilderness?

Yes and no. The older log cabins at Fort Wilderness are being replaced with modern cabins that also are Disney Vacation Club properties.

They are still open to the general public for stays.

Apps

Continued from Page 1B

$5-$20+ a pop, too. Did I mention that Libby's 100% free?

Financial savvy made simple

Speaking of spending too much money, January might be a time for resolutions, but saving money is a yearlong affair. Rocket Money (you might have known them as "Truebill") saves me cold hard cash every single month. You link it with your accounts, and it sniffs out recurring payments you might not even know you're making. A streaming service you thought you canceled last year? A free trial that converted to an actual bill without you knowing? Rocket Money finds where you've been flushing money down the train and plugs those leaks. It's free to try, with premium features ranging from $6 to $12 per month, but it pays for itself in no time.

With the cash you save, put some of it to work for you. Even investing newbies often find the Stash app easy to use. It's a simple, accessible doorway to diversified investing, and you can start with as little as $5. The app has user-friendly educational tools and guides that turn investing confusion into empowerment.

When life gets a little too much, Todoist can be your North Star. I use it because I can finally see all of my calendars in one place, and it tracks my reminders and tasks from various apps. My brain just works better if I can see everything at a glance, and Todoist is that place.

There's a totally free beginner plan, but the paid Pro plan is $5 per month or $48 per year.

Connecting and creating

Nobody said adulting can't be fun, right? Whenever I have a few minutes standing around an airport lounge or waiting for a meeting to start, I tap my worries away with Happy Color. It may sound childish, but coloring is a universal pastime, and these color-by-number adult coloring book pages deliver the goods.

With thousands of soothing designs, it keeps me from doomscrolling and that's priceless. It's free, with a paid option to remove ads.

7 travel trends will shape vacations in ’25

Beth Luberecki
FamilyVacationist.com

A new year brings new opportunities to travel.

When it comes to where and how we’ll be traveling in 2025, there are several trends that will be driving everything from the destinations we choose to the activities we’ll do while on vacation. Whether you’re an adventure seeker or a digital detoxer looking for ways to slow down, here are the trends that will influence the way your family travels in 2025.

Some of the pool swim up suites at Excellence El Carmen, Punta Cana.
PROVIDED BY EXCELLENCE EL CARMEN

1. A desire to get off beaten path

Maybe you feel like you’ve been there, done that. Or you’re concerned about overtourism and the crowds descending on popular vacation spots. Whatever the reason, you and millions of other travelers may be looking to detour from the usual spots in 2025 to find hidden gems and visit under-the-radar destinations.

“People are seeking out smaller towns and more local authentic experiences,” says Christina Bennett, consumer travel expert for Priceline. “I would dub 2025 as the year of intentional travel. Travelers are looking to go to unique places where they are really getting bespoke experiences. They want to live like a local and not go to touristy attractions; it’s about really experiencing a new culture, getting to know the locals, and forging new connections.”

Adventure tour company Backroads, for example, has seen interest in destinations like Belfast and Newfoundland, with tours like its Canada Gulf Islands Multi-Adventure Tour and Norway’s Ålesund Multi-Adventure Tour trending with travelers. Expedia Group’s list of “detour destinations” includes spots like Brescia, Italy, and Fukuoka, Japan.

“You might still go to those popular tourist destinations, but families are going to plan a side trip to get away from the crowds and see something a little bit different,” says Melanie Fish, a travel expert at Expedia Group. “Families are still going to go to Paris and see the Eiffel Tower, but they’re also going to add on a detour perhaps to a place like Reims. They’re still going to go to Los Angeles and visit the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but they’re also going to drive up the coast to take in that majestic scenery and stop in someplace like Santa Barbara.” So 2025 would be a good year to explore the Midwest, an under-the-radar spot like California’s Bodega Bay, or an off-the-beaten-path destination in Europe or Asia.

2. The continued appeal of all-inclusive resorts

All-inclusive hotels and resorts are having a moment, and it shows no signs of stopping in 2025. Major hotel chains keep increasing their presence in the space, with Marriott opening the brand’s first-ever all-inclusive, Marriott Cancun, An All-Inclusive Resort, in 2024, and Kimpton making its entry into the space with Kimpton Tres Rios in Mexico’s Riviera Maya in spring 2025.

Traveler interest in all-inclusives is helping drive that growth. “I give families credit for having been fans of all-inclusives for years and years,” says Expedia Group’s Fish. “What we’re seeing for 2025 is other audiences catching up to the love of an all-inclusive, specifically Gen Z, which is helping drive this kind of glow-up for all-inclusives.”

In fact, the use of the “all-inclusive” filter on Hotels.com has jumped 60% year-over-year. “The all-inclusive filter on Hotels.com has really gotten a workout over the past year,” says Fish. “People are using it with increasingly more frequency. And all-inclusives are no longer a generic experience across the category with buffets three times a day and all-you-can-drink well margaritas at the swim-up bar.”

You can find a biohacking menu at the spa at Grand Velas Riviera Maya, overwater suites at adults-only Royalton CHIC Antigua, swim-up suites and super-fun theming at Nickelodeon Hotels & Resorts Riviera Maya, and opportunities to swim in a cenote and connect with the natural environment at Sandos Caracol Eco Resort in Playa del Carmen.

“All-inclusive resorts are not all created equal, but the tried-and-true brands are doing really well in this space,” says Erika Richter, vice president of communications for the American Society of Travel Advisors. “And I think part of the reason is travel has become a lot more complicated. There are just so many more options available, and people kind of get decision fatigue when it comes to planning. By the time they’re ready to take the vacation, it’s like where can I go to put my brain in a box and not have to think about meals and activities?”

3. Memory-making multigenerational vacations

When it comes to family vacations, “the more the merrier” will continue to be a common theme. “Last year, 1 in 5 travelers took a multigenerational trip, making it one of the most popular travel trends for 2024,” says Annie Roberts, senior vice president of club and owner services for Club Wyndham, which recently surveyed 2,000 American travelers in partnership with Talker Research to get a sense of travel patterns for 2025. “In 2025, travelers are looking to make even more memorable trips with their families.”

A 2024 survey of North American families by Beaches Resorts found that 50% of parents polled would prefer a multigenerational vacation over a vacation with just the kids. In fact, 57% of respondents want to start new family traditions centered around vacations with grandparents, and almost 70% of parents actively want their children’s grandparents to join more of their family vacations.

Among those surveyed, all-inclusive resorts, cruises, and vacation rentals will continue to be popular options for big family trips. “An all-inclusive is a way to be together as a multigenerational trip but not *all* the time,” says Expedia Group’s Fish. “People can do their own thing, then gather for a meal or see each other throughout the day. And no one has to be the one in charge of making all the reservations and figuring out transportation. It’s a more relaxed way of taking a family vacation.”

The grandparents will play a big role in making these kinds of trips happen. According to data from Booking.com, 45% of Baby Boomers and 40% of grandparents over 80 would rather spend money on a family trip of a lifetime in 2025 than leave an inheritance to their children. And when it comes to funding these tips, around 80% of Boomers are happy to pay for their kids and grandkids in order to travel together.

“These trips allow older generations to fund meaningful, once-in-a-lifetime experiences for their families while creating lasting memories,” says Angela Cavis, head of communications at Booking.com. “Family-friendly destinations offering adventure and relaxation, like national parks, beach escapes, and ski resorts, will remain popular.”

4. Getting outdoors day and night

The pandemic helped reignite an interest in and appreciation for spending time outdoors that hasn’t abated as the years go on. In fact, a recent survey from Campspot found that 82% of travelers were interested in or planning on taking nature-centric trips in 2025 to escape the stresses of everyday life.

National and state parks remain popular options for these kinds of getaways, but last year’s solar eclipse has also inspired travelers to kick things up a notch in search of out-of-this-world kinds of experiences. That’s why phenomena like the northern lights will influence where and how people travel in 2025.

“We expect growth in ‘NocTourism,’ or travel tied to natural phenomena such as eclipses or the northern lights,” says Booking.com’s Cavis. “Over half of Americans are considering visiting Dark Sky locations for uninterrupted stargazing, and 52% would travel for a once-in-a-lifetime solar event. We saw the beginnings of this trend with the eclipse this spring, and it’s only expected to grow in popularity.”

Vrbo put together a “Phenomena-List” with even more ideas to build a trip around, like the Yosemite Firefall in February and synchronous firefly season in the Great Smoky Mountains in June. “I credit the total eclipse for kicking off this trend in 2024, when private vacation homes out in nature away from the city lights all along the path of totality sold out,” says Expedia Group’s Fish. “People really got a charge out of having that front-row seat to nature, and it inspired them to want more of it.”

Tour companies will also help families chase their wildest dreams in 2025. Among the new trips introduced by Intrepid Travel for 2025 is a six-day Iceland Family Holiday that includes visits to waterfalls and crater lakes along with a search for the northern lights, while Backroads lists its Iceland Northern Lights Multi-Adventure Tour among its trending trips for 2025.

5. The joys of slowing down

In the past couple of years, travelers squeezed in a lot of activity-packed trips to must-see destinations after the pandemic put a pause on travel. This year, expect to see an appreciation for a slower pace and vacations that prioritize family togetherness over checking off a list of sites.

Expedia Group calls it the “joy of missing out.” “It’s a play on this idea that people were traveling driven by FOMO,” says Fish. “But now people are craving time away together and realizing that one way to get that is to zig when everybody else is zagging. Rent that private vacation home in the mountains or in a more remote destination, where your primary activity is doing a whole lot of nothing. It really lends itself to what a vacation used to be, a getaway from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and a chance to recharge.”

Travelers will also apply this approach when exploring new cities and countries. “Rather than cramming too many destinations into a single trip, travelers are opting for slower travel experiences that allow them to immerse themselves in a few places over a longer period,” says Stacey Barber, vice president of AAA Travel. “This includes multidestination rail trips, road trips, or extended stays in one region.”

6. Traveling for concerts and other experiences

Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour dominated the cultural landscape over the past year-plus, and many fans discovered the delights of combining a concert experience with travel to a maybe new-to-them destination. Data from Expedia, for example, found that interest in Indianapolis was up 120% ahead of the city’s fall 2024 Eras Tour dates.

Plenty of U.S. residents also headed to places like London or Paris to catch the tour stops there. “People realized that they could combine a trip to Europe and a chance to see their favorite artist for the same cost, if not less, than they would have paid in the U.S.,” says Expedia Group’s Fish.

“I think people have realized that you can combine a passion for following your favorite artist or your sports team with travel and have a really unique experience,” says Priceline’s Bennett. “I think we’ll continue to see people planning trips they would have taken around sporting events and concerts, or maybe even planning trips they may not have taken and exploring new destinations based on where their passions are.”

Those passions can also include favorite TV series and films. “The allure of ‘set-jetting’ is captivating travelers, as they explore the enchanting locations seen in their favorite movies and TV shows,” says Club Wyndham’s Roberts. That could mean following in the footsteps of "Emily in Paris," capturing the magic of "Gilmore Girls" in a small New England town, or seeing London through the eyes of Paddington Bear.

7. Budgeting for travel no matter what

Economic issues may be dominating the news cycle of late, but many people will find ways to travel no matter what the financial future brings. “Regardless of the economy, travel remains a highly prioritized discretionary expense,” says Priceline’s Bennett. “It’s too soon to know what happens in 2025 with the economy, but we feel strongly that travel will continue to be prioritized.”

Meaningful travel experiences can be found across the financial spectrum, from luxury resorts and cruises to camping trips and lower-cost lodging options. “Budget will always play a significant role in shaping how people travel, influencing both destination choices and travel behaviors,” says AAA Travel’s Barber. “However, we find that even if budgets are tight, people will still find a way to travel, whether by cutting back on other expenses or taking advantage of destinations closer to home.”

Luckily, there are lots of ways to save money on car rentals, airfare, or hotel rooms; and road trips have always been a fun alternative to traveling to a more far-flung location. Lower-priced vacation destinations or budget-friendly resorts can also help keep vacation costs down.

7 travel trends will shape how and where you vacation in 2025 originally appeared on FamilyVacationist.com.

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Government offices closed on national day of mourning

Gabe Hauari and Fernando Cervantes Jr.
USA TODAY

President Joe Biden has declared today as a national day of mourning to honor former President Jimmy Carter, who died on Dec. 29 at the age of 100.

As part of the declaration, Biden ordered flags to be flown at half-staff for a period of 30 days following Carter’s death. Carter’s official state funeral will be held today at the Washington National Cathedral in the nation’s capital.

Biden called on the American people to assemble on today “in their respective places of worship” to pay homage to Carter.

“I invite the people of the world who share our grief to join us in this solemn observance,” Biden said in a statement following Carter’s death.

On previous national days of mourning, such as after the deaths of former Presidents George H.W. Bush in 2018 and Gerald Ford in 2006, federal offices and stock markets were closed in the U.S.

Here’s what to know about whether government offices will be open or closed today.

Federal offices will be closed to commemorate Carter’s death, following an executive order issued by Biden on Dec. 30. Similarly to a federal holiday, not all federal workers will be exempt of working, as some could be deemed as vital.

Supreme Court Justice John Roberts also ordered the Supreme Court building closed in recognition of the national day of mourning for Carter.

Although the court was not scheduled to be in session today, the court will hear arguments the next day in TikTok’s challenge to a federal law requiring the popular short-form video app to sever ties with its Chinese parent company by Jan. 19.

All U.S. Postal Service post offices will be closed and mail will not be delivered today, the USPS confirmed to USA TODAY.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Tuscaloosa: The United Way of West Alabama raised more than $4 million for 30 nonprofit agencies during its 2024 campaign.

ALASKA Juneau: The Juneau Assembly has unanimously approved a new contract for the city-owned hospital and union employees after a monthslong stalemate, KTOO reported.

ARIZONA Tempe: Arizona State University Research Park in Tempe will be the site of one of the nation's three microchip research and development flagship facilities, the U.S. Department of Commerce and Natcast, a nonprofit entity of the Commerce Department, announced. The facility will have a formidable name: the CHIPS for America NSTC Prototyping and National Advanced Packaging Manufacturing Program Advanced Packaging Piloting Facility. It will be called PPF for short.

ARKANSAS Fort Smith: Six Fort Smith police officers were terminated from their jobs within the department after an internal investigation.

CALIFORNIA Sacramento: California started 2025 with an above-average snowpack, but a state official says it's too soon to determine whether that's good news for the water supply. The statewide snowpack's snow water equivalent was 108% of the average for Jan. 2, the Department of Water Resources reported in a news release at water.ca.gov.

COLORADO Larimer County: Emergency first responders in Northern Colorado will now be able to provide lifesaving whole blood to patients in car crashes or other serious accidents in the field before they reach the hospital. A new program launched in December in partnership with UCHealth EMS and Thompson Valley EMS will give first responders in much of Larimer and Weld counties access to whole blood in the field so they can give blood to patients before they get to the hospital.

CONNECTICUT Norwich: A Norwich Public Utilities employee sustained injuries from a boiler at NPU's wastewater treatment plant.

DELAWARE Dover: Wireless network company Ligado Networks LLC filed for bankruptcy in Delaware late on Sunday, seeking to cut $7.8 billion in debt after government agencies blocked its planned expansion into land-based 5G wireless services.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: Officials said an investigation is underway after a house fire displaced two people and killed two cats, DC News Now reported.

FLORIDA Fort Lauderdale: Two people were found dead inside the landing gear of a JetBlue commercial airplane that landed on Monday evening in Florida. The aircraft had landed at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport after taking off from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport.

GEORGIA Savannah: The Ogeechee Riverkeeper and the Savannah Harbor-Interstate 16 Corridor Joint Development Authority issued a joint statement that the Ogeechee Riverkeeper had agreed to dismiss its challenge to the groundwater withdrawal permits issued to Bryan and Bulloch counties after reaching a settlement.

HAWAII Wailuku: Leaders of United Nurses and Health Care Employees of Hawaii announced that the union's members have voted to ratify a four-year contract with Maui Health, Hawaii News Now reported.

IDAHO Sawtooth City: Sawtooth Avalanche officials said a man was rescued and taken to a hospital after he was fully buried in a large avalanche for about 15 minutes over the weekend, KTVB reported.

INDIANA South Bend: The former Z.B. Falcons building will gain a second life as the new Western Branch library. The St. Joseph County Public Library closed on its purchase of the site in mid-December. Now, with preliminary drawings in the works, the library hopes to begin an "extensive" renovation of the Falcons building in 2025, communications manager Daniel Lichty said.

IOWA Des Moines: Iowa ranked in the top 10 best states to retire in 2025, according to a financial services company. The Motley Fool surveyed 1,500 Americans to rank all 50 states to find out what is most important to those who are retiring. Iowa placed eighth out of all 50 states, with an overall score of 78 out of 100.

HIGHLIGHT: ILLINOIS

Tim Rooker assembles a reproduction 1934 pyramidal military tent at Armbruster Manufacturing Co. TED SCHURTER/USA TODAY NETWORK

Springfield: The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum has acquired an extensive collection of documents and artifacts from a Springfield-based tent manufacturer that ceased operations in 2024 after nearly 150 years. Armbruster Manufacturing Co., now part of Traube Tent & Structures in Columbia, Ill., was a one-time global leader in the industry, producing tents for state fairs, movie sets, circus companies, military operations during both world wars and the Red Cross. At the time of its closing in early June, it was the country's oldest family-owned tent maker.

KANSAS Brown County: The Kansas Highway Patrol continues to investigate a Brown County highway crash in which a Washburn University faculty member and his wife died, Brown County Attorney Kevin M. Hill said.

KENTUCKY Louisville: Seven Kentucky and Tennessee bishops are the latest to join the chorus of U.S. Catholic leaders expressing solidarity with immigrants over the uncertainty surrounding President-elect Donald Trump's hardline proposals such as mass deportation.

LOUISIANA Lafayette: At the recent Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, the National Band Association presented the Lafayette Concert Band and Acadian Wind Symphony conductor Gerald Guilbeaux the Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts Award.

MAINE Kennebunk: The founders of Tom's of Maine have sold their historic home on Main Street for $1.7 million. Tom and Kate Chappell, the couple behind the toothpaste and other personal care products, lived at the 20-room home for more than four decades, according to Legacy Properties Sotheby's International Realty in Kennebunk, which handled the listing and sale of the property.

MARYLAND Hagerstown: An inmate was charged with the attempted second-degree murder of a correctional officer last summer at a state prison south of Hagerstown.

MASSACHUSETTS Boston: For more than five years straight, Massachusetts has been one of the most moved out of states in the country. Moving company United Van Lines released its annual national movers study, which compiles moving data for each state around the country. In 2024, Massachusetts ranked No. 5 on the list of most outbound moves. Prior to that, Massachusetts was No. 7 for three years straight.

MICHIGAN Holland: It's been almost three years since a plan to relocate a portion of historic greenhouses to Centennial Park was first presented by the Holland Parks and Recreation Department. Although that move hasn't happened yet, the plan could take important steps in early 2025, according to the city manager.

MINNESOTA Monticello: Xcel Energy said last week it has received an approval from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to operate its Monticello Nuclear Generating plant in Minnesota for an additional 20 years through 2050. The company has also received an approval from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to extend operations through 2040 and said it would seek the state regulator's nod for the additional 10 years.

MISSISSIPPI Jackson: A "high" level of respiratory illness activity in Mississippi could be causing people such as children and older adults to seek medical care, health officials said.

MISSOURI Springfield: John C. Holstein, retired judge and former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Missouri, died Dec. 31 at his home in Springfield. He was 79.

MONTANA Helena: The 69th Montana Legislature will require much patience and a lot of hard work, said Republican leaders on Monday at the start of the session as members of both chambers took their oaths of office, The Daily Montanan reported. Leadership members from both parties were officially sworn in, with Brandon Ler, R-Savage, as speaker of the House after winning his caucus' election in November, according to the news outlet.

NEBRASKA Omaha: A federal audit found that the Creighton Federal Credit Union's sudden loss of $12.2 million in 2024 was due to statement fraud spanning decades, WOWT reported.

NEVADA Las Vegas: A 12-year-old girl alleged to have fatally stabbed her father in North Las Vegas is set to be evaluated for competence in a Clark County court, according to local reports.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Dover: The Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation has been awarded a $25,000 grant from the Greater Rochester Community Health Foundation on behalf of the Alliance for Community Transportation. The funds will help expand ACT's Community Rides service, which offers fare-free transportation to medical appointments for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

NEW JERSEY Trenton: The bald eagle and the osprey were both removed from New Jersey's list of endangered species on Monday, reflecting 40 years of work to restore the iconic birds' populations.

NEW MEXICO Santa Fe: Three tribal communities in the state are receiving a total of $22.6 million in funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to boost high speed internet access, KRQE reported.

NEW YORK Albany: Gov. Kathy Hochul will use her State of the State address to propose a series of initiatives that could reduce delays and speed travel on Metro-North Railroad and Amtrak trains in the Lower Hudson Valley. The address is scheduled for Jan. 13.

NORTH CAROLINA Asheville: Damage along Swannanoa River Road is indicative of the extensive devastation wrought by Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina – muddy debris mounded along roadsides, cargo containers stacked like blocks and vehicles strewn among the wreckage. Sections of the road have remained closed since the storm, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation confirmed there is no set timeline for reopening.

NORTH DAKOTA Williston: Sens. Kevin Cramer and John Hoeven said the North Dakota Department of Transportation is receiving nearly $2 million in federal grant funding to improve traffic at Marley Crossing near Trenton, KUMV reported.

OHIO Columbus: Construction is expected to start this spring on new, smaller youth prisons, which will allow the state to eventually close the larger Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility. The project is expected to cost the state $260 million.

OKLAHOMA Edmond: For the second time in five months, the Edmond Public Schools Board of Education voted unanimously to uphold a district committee's decision to keep a controversial award-winning book in the libraries of the district's three high schools.

OREGON Corvallis: Removal of a train that derailed and crashed into the Marys River after a trestle collapsed on Saturday will take several days, a spokesperson for Portland & Western Railroad said. The train was carrying urea and other agricultural fertilizers, spokesperson Tom Ciuba said. Booms were deployed to contain potentially leaked materials, according to Corvallis Police.

PENNSYLVANIA Erie: Gannon University and Ursuline College in Pepper Pike, Ohio, near Cleveland, will merge by the end of 2026. Trustees of both universities have approved an agreement to join the two schools, subject to required regulatory and accreditation approvals. The combined university will be the largest Catholic system of higher education along Lake Erie.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: With the Rhode Island Department of Housing still trying to cement its role after three years of existence, its leaders want it to become the Executive Office of Housing. The name change is one of the proposals in a new plan to streamline Rhode Island's housing bureaucracy and centralize policymaking within the Department of Housing.

SOUTH CAROLINA Pendleton: Dog owners from many states traveled to the T. Ed Garrison Livestock Arena for the 58th All-Breed Dog Show held by the Clemson Kennel Club Jan. 4-5.

SOUTH DAKOTA Sioux Falls: Augustana University recently received a grant for $45,000 per year through 2028 for youth education in STEM-related fields in South Dakota. More than $10,000 of the grant will support STEM education for middle school students by way of the state's FIRST LEGO League Program that holds robotics competitions at AU.

TENNESSEE Knoxville: A Knox County committee is recommending a 10-year contract renewal for Emerald Academy, the district's original charter school. Now, the Knox County Board of Education will decide whether the combined elementary and middle school can continue to operate.

TEXAS El Paso: A historic 110-unit hotel in downtown El Paso is set for a complete renovation and rebranding. The Gateway Hotel will be transformed into a La Quinta Inn & Suites by Wyndham, according to Patel Capital Groups, the building's new owner.

UTAH Ogden: Ogden-Hinckley Airport celebrated the beginning of a $4.4 million project that would expand the airport's terminal, KSL reported.

VERMONT Burlington: A federal court judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed against the University of Vermont by the school's Students for Justice in Palestine chapter.

VIRGINIA Waynesboro: A 19-year-old Staunton man is behind bars following a weekend police chase that resulted in numerous crashes, including two overturned vehicles, according to the Augusta County Sheriff's Office.

WASHINGTON Mercer Island: Police said an investigation is underway after Islander Middle School was vandalized with antisemitic and racist phrases and symbols, KOMO News reported.

WEST VIRGINIA Bridgeport: Gov. Jim Justice announced that the city will receive a $1.8 million grant for two new, outdoor, multipurpose turf fields, WV News reported.

WISCONSIN Marshfield: Marshfield Clinic Health System has officially merged with Sanford Health. According to a joint release, the two organizations have completed their merger and are now integrated as one nonprofit health system, operating as Sanford Health.

WYOMING Cheyenne: The Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office has announced that the U.S. Department of the Interior has approved an updated historic landmark designation for the state Capitol building, Wyoming News Now reported.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

PGA Tour Sony Open preview, plus TGL opener review, 2C

Bill Belichick back to NFL? Multiple teams eyeing the new North Carolina coach, per report, **7C**

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See who won and who lost in college men's and women's basketball, plus the NHL and NBA

Penn State coach James Franklin's record against top-five teams and in marquee games against the biggest brands isn't good. A win in the Orange Bowl CFP semifinal would be a big step. MARK J. REBILAS/IMAGN IMAGES

BIG-TIME MOMENT

Penn State puts off Michigan vibes, but James Franklin is no Jim Harbaugh

Blake Toppmeyer
College football columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

College football's bards mused this Playoff lacked a dominant team, like 2019 LSU or 2020 Alabama, although Ohio State sprints closer to resembling those past juggernauts.

What about 2023 Michigan, though? Anyone guilty of being the Wolverines' doppelganger? You know, that team that went undefeated a year ago but doesn't garner the same respect as some recent champions from the SEC? (Michigan's cheating might have something to do with that.)

Look inside the Big Ten to spot a potential Michigan 2.0.

I give you Penn State.

Let's tour the Nittany Lions:

- Bruising defense, equipped with dudes who wreak havoc and live in the opponent's backfield.
- Two splendid running backs, one as good as the other.
- A pass attack that highlights a tight end suited for the NFL.

Stop me if this sounds familiar. Should I keep going? OK.

- A veteran quarterback enjoying a career-best season.
- Dependable offensive line.
- Efficient in the red zone.

Who's this sounding like? It's sounding like 2023 Michigan.

Penn State can replicate Michigan if Franklin shakes past

A key difference is Michigan enjoyed undefeated distinction, while Penn State lost to Ohio State and Oregon.

Another difference? Penn State employs no one in a cheap disguise stealing the opponent's signs.

But the absence of a Connor Stalions doesn't much influence Penn State as much as the presence of James Franklin. His baggage in big games introduces an overdose of doubt toward the Nittany Lions.

Why do sportsbooks give Penn State the longest odds of winning the national championship? Franklin's paltry performance in games of magnitude, like Penn State's Orange Bowl matchup with Notre Dame on Thursday (7:30 p.m. ET, ESPN), must play a factor.

Ohio State fans grumble about Ryan Day's flops, but Day's shortcomings mostly center on one opponent. He stinks against Michigan, but you won't find Michigan in this playoff.

In the absence of their kryptonite, Day and the Buckeyes emerged stronger in the postseason. Day never has faced his Cotton Bowl adversary, Texas coach Steve Sarkisian, but he's a combined 8-0 against the two coaches opposite Ohio State on the bracket, Notre Dame's Marcus Freeman and Penn State's Franklin.

Day beat Franklin for the sixth consecutive time in November, when his Buckeyes emerged from Happy Valley with a 20-13 victory. A game that started with the Nittany Lions building a 10-point lead ended with Franklin shouting at a heckling fan while the coach exited the field.

As good as Penn State looked in its first two playoff victories, those results didn't reverse Franklin's narrative in marquee games. No one would mistake SMU for Notre Dame. No blue blood runs in Boise State's veins, only blue turf.

Examination of Penn State's playoff victories, though, reveals shades of Michigan.

"It's a very talented, disciplined, tough football team," Freeman said of Penn State. "Very creative offense. Utilizes a bunch of different personnel, a bunch of different formations. Going to force you to be extremely disciplined."

That's not coach-speak. Freeman

See TOPPMEYER, Page 3C

Matt Hayes
USA TODAY Sports Network

No one has yet to stop Penn State TE Warren

Pause for a moment and soak in this absurdity.

Tyler Warren is 6-foot-6, 260 pounds, and runs like a wide receiver. He set the Penn State single-season record for catches with 98. And counting.

Penn State's senior All-American tight end is the most – take your pick – intriguing, fascinating, dominating player left in the College Football Playoff. He's a matchup deficit for every opponent, no matter what defenses throw at him.

He's a WWE superstar prancing around his fiefdom, knowing full well no one can touch him. Only there's nothing fake about this all too real unicorn on the college football stage.

Or as Boise State coach Spencer Danielson plainly admitted, "The best way to try to negate (Warren) is to affect the quarterback."

In other words, if you can't pressure Penn State quarterback Drew Allar, there's no answer for Warren. Now everyone finally gets to witness this rare player in all of his glory, on the sport's biggest stage Thursday in the College Football Playoff Orange Bowl semifinal against Notre Dame.

"I'm glad I've got another week with these guys," Warren said after Penn State's CFP quarterfinal win over Boise State. "I'm trying to play every play like it's the last one."

Welcome Notre Dame, to defending the indefensible. Be prepared to fail – like everyone else.

"Obviously a difficult matchup problem," Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman says matter-of-factly.

And he's not overselling it.

If you haven't seen Warren before – because who among us didn't tune out Penn State in early November after yet another loss to Ohio State? – you're in for a remarkable revelation.

Like Warren, a former high school quarterback, leaping and scoring from the 3 – soaring over Illinois defenders and into the end zone while lined up at quarterback. Or doing it again, from the same spot on the field, against Washington.

See HAYES, Page 7C

Tight end Tyler Warren catches the ball but runs it, too, for Penn State. MATTHEW O'HAREN/IMAGN IMAGES

Black NFL head coaches facing a triple standard

Jarrett Bell
Columnist
USA TODAY

Antonio Pierce, gone.
Brian Callahan, staying.
Jerod Mayo, gone.
Brian Daboll, staying.
Ran Carthon, gone.
Trent Baalke, staying.
Now take an NFL version of the Rorschach test. See the pattern?

Pierce, Mayo and Carthon are Black. And they were given the NFL equivalent of a New York minute to prove themselves on their high-powered jobs before they were fired this week with horrific win-loss records.

Callahan, Daboll and Baalke are white. Their win-loss records stink, too. Yet they will be back in their high-powered jobs, afforded more time to prove themselves. Or not.

Sure, every case includes unique details, and the Black men weren't the only coaches and front office executives forced to walk the plank as NFL teams ignited another hiring and firing cycle.

Yet in a league that for generations has had such a sorry track record when it comes to providing opportunities to minorities, while trumpeting a creed of equality, some of the biggest moves (and non-moves) this week underscore another disturbing pattern that the NFL needs to be called on the carpet for.

You've heard of "sham" interviews. That suspicion prompted Minnesota Vikings defensive coordinator Brian Flores, following his stint as Miami Dolphins coach, to file a still unresolved class-action lawsuit against the NFL and several teams, alleging racial discrimination and phony interviews to comply with the Rooney Rule.

Well, the evil twin is "sham" opportunities.

According to data collected as part of USA TODAY Sports' NFL Coaches Project, since the Rooney Rule was instituted in 2003, non-white coaches have

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Pros join for a Hawaiian blessing to honor '24 Sony champ Murray

Adam Schupak
Golfweek | USA TODAY NETWORK

HONOLULU – The sun shined brightly at 8 a.m. on Tuesday as members of the PGA Tour, caddies, staff and media gathered with the family of Grayson Murray behind the 16th green and 17th tee at Waialae Country Club for a Hawaiian blessing and ceremony to remember their fellow competitor, who was supposed to defend his title this week.

"Is the flag at half-staff for Grayson or (U.S. President) Jimmy Carter," a player wondered.

A year ago Murray pulled off a remarkable up and down, not far from the site of the ceremony, at the par-3 17th, wedging to 3 feet at the last to join a playoff with Ben An and Keegan Bradley and pumping his fist when his 39-foot birdie putt dropped to win him the Sony Open in Hawaii. Four months later Murray took his life during the week of the Charles Schwab Challenge after withdrawing from the event. He was 30.

"Bow your heads," said Corbett Kalama, president of the Friends of Hawaii charity, who chanted a Hawaiian song in Grayson's memory.

PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan took off his loafers and let the waves lap over his feet on the beach as he joined those in attendance in tossing flowers into the water. Billy Horschel, Gary Woodland and Webb Simpson were among the PGA Tour pros with a heavy heart, who took part in the ceremony that Simpson called "an outpouring of love."

"That was a great turnout, wasn't it?" said Simpson, who added he misses Grayson "a ton."

Simpson first met Grayson when he was eight or nine and their mutual swing coach, Ted Kiegiel, told him, "Hey, this kid is really good."

Murray, who was born in Raleigh, North Carolina, kept improving. He won an individual and team state high school titles. He won the Callaway Junior Championships in San Diego three consecutive years, matching his idol, Tiger Woods. Woods sent Murray a letter on his 15th birthday congratulating him on his accomplishments.

He also won five times across the Korn Ferry Tour and PGA Tour and had spoken openly about his experiences with alcoholism, anxiety and depression prior to his death.

Jay Green, who was Grayson's caddie during his victory, wore the Rolex watch his boss had given him to commemorate their victory in the Aloha State. He's working for Will Gordon this week but a flood of emotions hit Green as he returned to the scene of his greatest moment alongside Grayson. Playing No. 18 in regulation, Murray had 80 yards to the hole and needed birdie.

The family of Grayson Murray and members of the PGA Tour community spread flowers during a Celebration of Life service honoring Grayson Murray. MADDIE MEYER/GETTY IMAGES

"I told him, 'Show me something here.' He hits it to 3 feet and taps it in," Green recalled. "We're in scoring before the start of the playoff and I'm as nervous as can be and he comes out and says, 'We're winning this thing.' That determination in his eyes and conviction in his voice, I'll never forget. When he set his mind to something, he was going to do it."

Time rolls on and every week there is another tournament winner in the history books, but for Murray's parents, Eric and Terry, there have been countless dark days. A new champion of the Sony Open in Hawaii will be crowned on Sunday, but first the likes of Aaron Baddeley, Austin Eckroat and Mackenzie Hughes lined up single file at the end of the ceremony and took turns giving Grayson's parents a hug.

"I hope this morning his parents were able to feel the love the Tour as a family has for Grayson," Simpson said.

"This morning was so emotional," said Eric Murray. "I was so proud of Grayson when he won the Sony. There's a lot of pain but also a lot of pride."

Asked how he'd like his son to be remembered, Eric said, "for his generosity. He'd give his shirt off his back to help anyone. We've heard from so many people whose lives he touched."

"Like buying a car for a family he met when he visited a children's hospital during a tournament," Terry said. "He'd never tell us the stories of his giving."

Grayson had written notes about the type of foundation he envisioned creating to help others who suffered like him. His parents plan to carry on those efforts, with the Grayson Murray Foundation, whose mission is to raise awareness and support of mental health and addiction challenges faced by individuals from all walks of life. Eric Murray said the foundation is on the ground floor, just receiving its 501-C3 status last week.

"We're going to keep his passion alive," Eric said.

Grayson's spirit was alive and well on Tuesday morning as out of darkness the sun in the sky shined bright.

PGA Tour
Sony Open in Hawaii

Course: Waialae Country Club in Honolulu (Par: 79; yardage: 7,044)
TV: Thursday-Friday, 7-10:30 p.m. ET (Golf Channel); Saturday-Sunday, 4-6 p.m. ET (NBC and Peacock) and 6-8 p.m. ET (Golf)

Stat

8 That's how many of the last 10 winners of the Sony Open in Hawaii played the week prior at The Sentry. This year 35 of the 60 players who teed it up at the Plantation Course last week are in the field this week at the Sony.

Keep an eye on ...

- Maverick McNealy. After capturing his first PGA Tour title at the RSM Classic in late November, McNealy kept his good play intact at the season opener at The Sentry in Maui, finishing tied for eighth.
- Hideki Matsuyama. The Japanese star shot an incredible 35-under par to win The Sentry. He already has won the Sony Open in 2022, one of seven pros to win the Hawaiian double, and has claimed three PGA Tour titles in the past 10 months.
- Tom Kim. After failing to win last season, the South Korean rising star is looking to get back into the winner's circle.

Thursday-Friday featured tee times

Golf Channel's coverage on Thursday will highlight the following pairings: Billy Horschel, Matt McCarty and Maverick McNealy (5:20 p.m. ET); and Hideki Matusyama, past champion Russell Henley and Sahith Theegala (5:30). On Friday, Golf Channel will feature Rookie of the Year Nick Dunlap, Austin Eckroat and Robert MacIntyre (5:20 ET) and U.S. Ryder Cup captain Keegan Bradley, Tom Kim and Brian Harman (5:30).

FedExCup

Hideki Matsuyama kicked off the new campaign with a convincing win at The Sentry and earned 700 FedExCup points for winning a signature event. The FedExCup consists of 39 events – 36 in the regular season and three in the FedExCup playoffs, which culminates Aug. 21-24 at the Tour Championship at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta. Scottie Scheffler is the defending champion.

1. Hideki Matsuyama	700
2. Collin Morikawa	400
3. Sungjae Im	350
4. Jhonattan Vegas	325
5. Ludvig Aberg	267
6. Corey Conners	267
7. Thomas Detry	267
8. Sam Burns	155
9. Maverick McNealy	155
10. Cameron Young	155

TGL opener 'most fun we ever had playing golf'

Tom D'Angelo
The Palm Beach Post
USA TODAY NETWORK

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. – Ludvig Aberg stroked his putt from 9 feet on the first hole, and before it dropped from the synthetic green and into the cup, Shane Lowry was walking in the ball with his putter high in the air.

TGL, the high-tech indoor golf league conceived four years ago and rubber-stamped by local residents Tiger Woods and Rory McIlroy, debuted Tuesday at SoFi Center on the campus of Palm Beach State College.

And the night was more about celebration and entertainment than competition with a DJ, music and cameras on wires and wheels. The Bay, with Aberg, Lowry and Wyndham Clark, crushed New York, 9-2, in the 15-hole match, but this was about players trash talking, fans counting down the shot clock and a hole in which the golfers had to drive the ball over ... lava.

Virtually, of course.

"The most fun we ever had playing golf," Clark and Lowry both said following the match.

Meanwhile, an MC tried to get the 1,500 fans inside the sold-out arena to forget everything they learned about golf etiquette, reminding them it's OK to scream.

"This is not a golf course, this is not a country club," he said. "This is a real club."

Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy all smiles as TGL debuts

The biggest smiles on the floor of the 250,000-square-foot arena during warm-ups belonged to Woods, McIlroy and Mike McCarley, the founder of TMRW Sports who brought the concept of TGL to Woods and McIlroy four years ago.

Rory McIlroy, left, and Tiger Woods watch golfers warm up for the inaugural match at SoFi Center, the home of TGL. GREG LOVETT/THE PALM BEACH POST

Woods and McIlroy roamed the floor of the arena, from tee box to rotating green, talking with players from both teams.

"This is an ability to showcase our sport," Tiger said during the ESPN broadcast. "It's not traditional golf, but it is golf. People rooting against Wyndham's putt ... you normally don't hear that at most golf events. This is very different for us. Not used to having this noise."

After the six players, including New York's Rickie Fowler, Xander Schauffele and Matt Fitzpatrick, met with an official and shook hands, much like three captains of a football team would for the coin toss, Lowry hit the first shot in TGL history into the 64x53-foot screen and onto a 377-yard par 4 hole called The Plank.

Two-hundred eighty-nine yards down the middle.

"I'm going to be the Scottie Scheffler of indoor golf," Lowry later said.

Lowry's drive set up Clark for an approach shot that set up Aberg for that 9-footer and the first point in league history.

Aberg later made a 32-footer.

For the record, the first water ball was hit by Aberg on the second hole. The first flirtation with the shot clock – and fan countdown – was Fitzpatrick's putt on the second hole. The first Hammer was thrown by The Bay on the 188-yard par-3 third hole called Set in Stone with Clark facing an 8-footer for the win.

New York accepted. Clark made the putt. And The Bay was awarded two points (the hole doubles when The Hammer is thrown and accepted) for a 3-0 lead that grew to 6-0. The Bay then clinched the match after winning the 10th hole.

"It was as bad as it could have possibly gone for the New York Golf Club," Schauffele said. "It was a rough go. I heard boos when I duffed my chip."

Schauffele later added: "They had good reason to boo. I probably would have booed me, too."

As for drama on opening night, The Bay made sure there was none. That led to a much quieter final five holes with New York not having much to chirp about.

"I thought it would be little more of a match," Clark said, repeatedly.

"You're going to make us the most hated team," Lowry told his teammate.

With opening night in the books, TGL now braces for its second unveiling, that being Tiger Woods' debut. Woods' Jupiter Links faces Los Angeles on Tuesday.

"It's really cool walking into an arena and doing what we got to do," Fowler said. "This is something fun for the game of golf. It's not trying to compete with what we do on the tour.

"This is a supplement to the game and hopefully open some people's eyes to what is possible."

ND's Golden played for Nittany Lions

Stephen Edelson
Asbury Park (N.J.) Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

There are many layers to the Al Golden story, from his Jersey Shore roots to his coaching success at football's highest levels. But peel it all away and what emerges is one of the more compelling storylines surrounding Thursday's Orange Bowl (7:30 p.m. ET, ESPN) in the College Football Playoff semifinals.

It was as a Penn State tight end that Golden first showed up in the national spotlight, catching the game-tying TD pass from Tony Sacca in the Nittany Lions' upset of No. 1 Notre Dame in 1990.

It all comes full circle 34 years later.

As the coordinator of a resurgent Notre Dame defense, Golden's wealth of experience will be invaluable as the Fighting Irish try to take down his alma mater and reach the national championship game.

"Al Golden, he's one of us. He's a Penn Stater," Penn State head coach James Franklin said Saturday. "I've known Al for a long time. Been a head coach, been in the NFL. He's doing a great job with their defense."

Defense wins championships

It's a winding career path that's delivered Golden, a Colts Neck, New Jersey, native, to this unique moment in college football history. And make no mistake, his fingerprints will be all over the result, with the coaching job he's done this season widely recognized as one of the best in the country.

The Fighting Irish held Georgia to just 10 points in the Sugar Bowl last week. And only two Notre Dame teams since 1985 have given up few points-per-game (13.5) than this one: the 1988 national championship team; and the 2012 team that lost to Alabama in the national championship game.

The Nittany Lions are averaging 34.5 points over the first two rounds of the playoff.

"He's been a tremendous hire for our program, not just our defense," Notre Dame head coach Marcus Freeman said Saturday. "He finds a way to motivate his players and to get them to play at a high level; he's been huge. And the thing I love about him is that he's able to work together well with his staff and they produce a great output."

Freeman's fondness for Golden's work can be seen in how the Irish have been aggressive all season with the ball on fourth downs, including against Georgia in the fourth quarter of the Fiesta Bowl when the Irish were pinned inside their own 20-yard line on a fourth-and-1. A trick play pulled Georgia offside and essentially locked the game up.

Clearly Freeman trusts Golden's defense to be ready if a situation like that goes awry, but do the two coaches consult on field-position decisions?

"No. I wish he would check with me once in a while," Golden said with a laugh when he met with reporters before the Georgia game. "No, we have those conversations during the week, and really on game day he makes the call. And you don't want to have that discussion at that time, because people are always looking or it's on the Jumbotron and you're having a discussion and all that. I don't know what's the best way to say it – everything he calls is measured."

Climbing the ladder

A standout in high school at Red Bank (New Jersey) Catholic, where he began his coaching career as offensive coordinator in 1993, Golden's rise through the ranks has seen him take on some of the most difficult challenges.

After serving as a graduate assistant at Virginia, he was hired by Tom O'Brien, the former Cavaliers defensive coordinator, at Boston College in 1997, when O'Brien was tabbed to clean up the points shaving scandal that rocked the program a season earlier.

Former Cincinnati Bengals linebackers coach Al Golden is defensive coordinator at Notre Dame but one time played for Penn State. IMAGN IMAGES FILE PHOTO

He returned to his alma mater to coach the linebackers in 2000, before returning to Virginia to serve as Al Groh's defensive coordinator from 2001 to 2005.

But it was at Temple that Golden truly made a name for himself. Hired in 2006 with the Owls coming off a 0-11 season, Golden led them to their first bowl game in 30 years in 2009, winning nine games.

He got one of the highest profile jobs in the country when he was hired at Miami. But his tenure was doomed from the beginning when, just prior to the start of his first season in 2011, the scandal broke involving Nevin Shapiro, a big financial backer of the Miami program who orchestrated a massive Ponzi scheme, with the fallout resulting in a bowl ban and lost scholarships.

After three seasons with the Detroit Lions (2016-19), he went to the Super Bowl as the Cincinnati Bengals linebackers coach in 2002, before returning to the college ranks at Notre Dame.

"There's no substitution for experience," Freeman said. "And if Al Golden, or anybody else on our staff, has experience in a situation that maybe I don't, I'm a fool not to use the wisdom that they've gained from their experience."

And coaching in a national championship game would be the latest chapter in a unique football story that traces from the Jersey Shore through Penn State, with the Nittany Lions now standing in the way of chance to play for a national championship.

ORANGE BOWL BREAKDOWN

Three keys to Notre Dame vs. Penn State

Paul Myerberg
USA TODAY

The first team to 20 points could win the Orange Bowl and play for the national championship.

The other half of the College Football Playoff national semifinals has shootout potential. Ohio State has scored a combined 83 points through two playoff games and Texas has scored 78, with a little help from two overtimes in the Peach Bowl win against Arizona State.

Things between Penn State and Notre Dame should be a little slower, a little more plodding and a lot more reliant on the play of two elite defenses.

Penn State has allowed 24 points through two playoff games. Against Boise State in the Fiesta Bowl, the Nittany Lions did what seemed to be impossible: contain All-American running back Ashton Jeanty. He finished with a season-low 104 rushing yards. Penn State's defense also managed to score two touchdowns in a dominant defeat of SMU in the first round.

Notre Dame held Indiana out of the end zone until two meaningless scores with minutes left in the fourth quarter and limited Georgia to just 62 rushing yards and 4.9 yards per play.

Look for these defenses to define the Orange Bowl. Here are the key factors that will determine which team goes on to play for the national championship:

Riley Leonard vs. Drew Allar

Neither has been outstanding in the playoff. Leonard completed 23 of 32 attempts for 201 yards against the Hoosiers but only 3.8 yards per attempt against Georgia, though he did run for a team-high 80 yards in the 23-10 win. Allar has been inaccurate, hitting on 27 of 50 attempts, but had three touchdowns without an interception against the Broncos.

Penn State quarterback Drew Allar scrambles out of the backfield against Boise State. JOE RONDONE/ARIZONA REPUBLIC

The Nittany Lions have shown they can win when the passing game struggles to connect. But turnovers could be fatal: Penn State is 2-2 when Allar throws at least one interception, with the two wins coming by a combined 10 points against Bowling Green and Southern California.

Notre Dame trusts Leonard – the former Duke transfer has earned that with his toughness, leadership and grasp of the scheme – but the offense runs smoothest when he takes a back seat to the running game. The Fighting Irish are averaging 30.3 points per game when attempting 30 or more passes, an average inflated by a 52-point outburst against Florida State, and 39.9 points per game when making fewer than 30 attempts.

Which defense wins up front?

Penn State's performance against Boise State showed the strength of what may be the Football Bowl Subdivision's best run defense. That came against the Broncos' offensive line, however; Notre Dame's offensive front will present a different type of challenge.

But it's clear that whichever team wins the battle on the line of scrimmage will win the Orange Bowl.

Penn State has allowed 1,513 rushing yards on 492 carries, or 3.1 yards per carry. Five opponents have cracked the 100-yard mark, led by Southern California's 189 yards on 7.9 yards per carry – most of that damage came on a 75-yard scoring run in the first quarter. The Nittany Lions have held five teams under 75 yards on the ground.

Notre Dame has given up 1,791 yards on 3.6 yards per carry in one fewer game. Like the Nittany Lions, the Irish struggled against USC, allowing 197 yards and two scores, and gave up 190 yards in September's shocking loss to Northern Illinois.

But Notre Dame's numbers are also impacted by two games against service academies: Navy ran for 222 yards and Army for 207 yards, though they lost by a combined 72 points. And the Irish held the Black Knights nearly 100 yards below their FBS-best per-game average.

Who makes a big play downfield?

Neither team is adept at developing explosive plays in the passing game.

Penn State is tied for 86th nationally with 15 receptions of 30 or more yards and ranks 108th with just four gains of 40 or more yards. Notre Dame is even worse, at 130th with four passing plays of 30-plus yards and tied for 126th with one completion of 40-plus.

The Irish have overcome this lack of punch with one of the nation's most explosive running games. They rank fourth nationally with 11 gains on the ground of 40 or more yards and are one of just eight teams in the FBS with a 90-yard gain.

In a game that will be played on the line of scrimmage, the ability to deliver one big gain downfield could change the complexion of the Orange Bowl, forcing the opposing defense to devote more resources to the back end and freeing things up inside the box.

Toppmeyer

Continued from Page 1C

accurately described Penn State, and facing Franklin's squad will be a lot like looking in the mirror for Notre Dame.

Notre Dame the type of team that beats Franklin

Here's the quiet part no opposing coach would say out loud: Franklin shrivels against opponents of Notre Dame's stature. He becomes a bespectacled turtle upon sight of a big dog. He's pitiful against top-five teams and the biggest brands.

Penn State fans won't need this reminder, but for the rest of us, consider Franklin's Penn State record against these opponents:

- vs. Ohio State: 1-10
- vs. Michigan: 3-7
- vs. Michigan State: 5-5
- vs. SEC opponents: 2-4

Franklin avoided embarrassment by smashing SMU and handling Boise State. He would earn respect by beating Notre Dame.

Trust Penn State in Orange Bowl means trusting Franklin

Jim Harbaugh performed woefully bad in the postseason before winning the national championship. You don't win the big game until you do. Michigan's khaki king never won a College Football Playoff game until he burned his blaze of victories last season, not stopping before he'd left for the NFL.

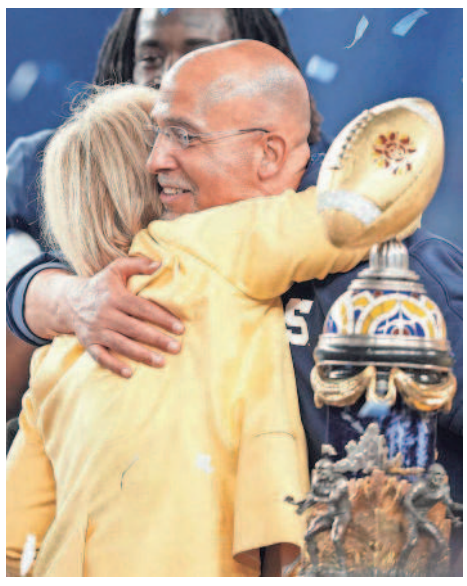
Kirby Smart and Dabo Swinney are college football's only active coaches to have won national championships, meaning that no matter who's celebrating on Jan. 20 in Atlanta, a coach will have captured his first national title.

Could it be Franklin? The team's makeup indicates yes. It's not the most complete left in the bracket – looking at you, Buckeyes – but Penn State resembles 2023 Michigan, and 2023 Michigan would contend in this tournament.

Previously, I've labeled Penn State a light beer version of 2023 Michigan, but there have been plenty of games this season in which the Nittany Lions played like a full-bodied brew, and there's nothing watered down about Penn State's superstar tight end Tyler Warren or defensive menaces Abdul Carter and Kobe King.

Put it this way: Harbaugh could win a national championship with this Penn State team.

I like the team. I just don't entirely trust the coach.


Penn State and coach James Franklin defeated Boise State last week in the Fiesta Bowl. JOE CAMPOREALE/IMAGN IMAGES

NFL's 6* open head coach jobs ranked

Nate Davis
USA TODAY

New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft, right, speaks to Jerod Mayo after his hiring in January 2024.
ERIC CANHA/IMAGN IMAGES

Though "Black Monday" has evolved into something that's more of a battleship gray – Doug Pederson, formerly of the Jaguars, was the only NFL head coach fired the day after the 2024 regular season concluded – there are nevertheless (currently) a half-dozen vacancies across a league that remains in constant flux but has simply moved away from 24 hours of mass professional carnage.

Alternately, the diminution of Black Monday also underscores the possibility – perhaps likelihood – that more coaching changes are coming down the pike.

Some owners simply take more time before rendering a decision – the Raiders' Mark Davis dismissed Antonio Pierce on Tuesday – while surprise retirements, resignations and the playoffs can also suddenly alter the landscape.

There's also a unique circumstance this year as Mike McCarthy's contract is set to expire, but he can't negotiate with other teams until Jan. 14 – meaning he and the Dallas Cowboys will either come to a mutual agreement to remain professionally hitched or will opt for a parting of the ways.

So while the list could certainly grow beyond six* openings, let's assess the current ones from most attractive to least:

1. New England Patriots

Quarterback situation

Tom Brady's unparalleled achievements cast a very wide shadow here. Yet it appears that Drake Maye, the No. 3 pick in last year's draft, has a very good chance to be a very good long-term answer himself. Given its apparent weaknesses, the organization was probably wise to hold Maye back in the early stages of the 2024 campaign. However, he frequently did a nice job making lemonade out of lemons, especially with his legs – Maye's 7.8 yards per attempt were the highest in the league among players with at least 50 rushes. His arm strength and moxie were also quite apparent. He'll obviously need more help in 2025 – and the team is well equipped to provide it – but the Patriots were noticeably more competitive when Maye was on the field than they were under journeyman Jacoby Brissett.

Rookie Joe Milton's scintillating performance in Week 18 illustrated why New England carried the highly talented – but raw – sixth-round rookie on the active roster all season rather than expose him on the practice squad. Even if his long-term future isn't in Foxborough, Massachusetts, he might be a valuable commodity in the future if he continues to progress. Adding a veteran backup will probably be necessary if Brissett doesn't re-sign.

Roster

It's not pretty. Bill Belichick, who had a large hand in constructing this team, was famous for getting the most out of individual players and tailoring game plans to their specific strengths. His very brief replacement, Jerod Mayo, couldn't do that in 2024, though – in fairness – neither did Belichick in 2023.

Cornerbacks Christian Gonzalez and Marcus Jones seem to be long-term building blocks along with DE Keion White. But one couldn't blame the Patriots if they invested all of their cap and draft resources in 2025 into the offense in a bid to support Maye. Ja'Lynn Polk was a notable disappointment in 2024, but he isn't the first wideout to struggle mightily as a rookie.

Salary cap

New England is projected to have nearly $124 million in available cap space this year, per OverTheCap, the most in the league. It's a tempting component of the job for the next coach given the opportunity to realistically target players he might want – perhaps a rising star like WR Tee Higgins, who's coming off a franchise tag in Cincinnati.

Executive vice president of player personnel Eliot Wolf was mainly responsible for managing the roster in 2024. But owner Robert Kraft hasn't divulged what Wolf's role will be moving forward, though he is expected to remain with the organization.

2025 draft

Sunday's victory against Buffalo was hardly meaningless – it cost the Patriots this year's No. 1 pick and dropped them to fourth in Round 1. And while falling three spots might not seem like an especially big deal for a team that won't be in the market for a young quarterback, significant capital was likely lost in a year where the quarterback crop appears thin and trading that top selection might have brought a nice return. New England does own an extra third-rounder.

Outlook

The presumption is that Kraft will pursue Mike Vrabel, who is already a proven NFL head coach – unlike Mayo – and also a Patriots legend who earned three rings as a linebacker in the early years of the Belichick-Brady dynasty and was a member of the legendary 18-1 team in 2007.

But despite the quick pivots from Belichick to Mayo to whomever is next – and Kraft has rightly taken blame for the quick hook on Mayo – this is typically a first-class organization that knows what winning looks like and spares no expense or effort in pursuit of that goal.

Kraft will surely take a painstaking approach to getting the next hire right, ensuring the org chart flows logically while passing the torch to someone who will have an enviable number of resources for what the fan base – and owner – will expect to be a resumption of Super Bowl aspirations.

2. Chicago Bears

Quarterback situation

Caleb Williams, the No. 1 overall pick of the 2024 draft and widely regarded as a generational prospect, is supposed to be this franchise's savior. It didn't go that way during his highly uneven rookie season, when he too often reverted to his bad college habits by consistently trying to force the issue on lost plays while absorbing a league-worst 68 sacks. Yet Williams also flashed the brilliance that landed him in this position and, while he made plenty of mistakes in terms of game management, he also set a rookie record by throwing 353 consecutive passes without an interception. Bottom line, his presence and potential will be quite an enticement for prospective coaches – Ben Johnson? – eyeing this job.

There's also plenty to like about 24-year-old backup Tyson Bagent, but it would probably behoove the organization to bring in a veteran to tutor Williams and perhaps serve as a trusted sounding board for both youngsters.

Roster

There are plenty of good players here, notably WRs DJ Moore and Rome Odunze, who was picked eight spots after Williams, RB D'Andre Swift and TE Cole Kmet – though their collective output was certainly depressed by the offense's dysfunction in 2024. The O-line has room to improve, but it shouldn't be inordinately blamed for Williams' outlandish sack total, the rookie causing quite a bit of self-sabotage.

The defense regressed but appears set in key spots with CB Jaylon Johnson, LB Tremaine Edmunds and pass rusher Montez Sweat. All of them need to play better in 2025, and the front seven could use reinforcements.

WR Keenan Allen and G Teven Jenkins are the most notable free agents.

Salary cap

The team is projected to have more than $80 million to spend in free agency, which is presently among the five highest bankrolls in the league. Talent acquisition hasn't been an issue for GM Ryan Poles, though it obviously needs to coalesce better under the next coaching staff.

2025 draft

Poles' trade of the No. 1 pick in the 2023 draft has one more dividend to pay as the Bears own Carolina's second-rounder this year. That should mean Chicago picks four times among the top 72 selections, including 10th overall – and there's definitely more work to do in order to build up the supporting cast around Williams.

Outlook

The prospect of working with Williams on a rookie contract – and with so many other quality pieces in place – should make this a highly desirable job.

However, a rabid fan base looking for something more than 1985 highlights and memories will expect near-instant results – which won't be easy in the NFC North, which just sent its three other members into the postseason field. And while the roster is solid, whoever succeeds Matt Eberflus must also ensure there's philosophical alignment with team president Kevin Warren and Poles given the good work that was done in 2024 was undermined by a lack of appropriate coaching infrastructure to properly develop a rookie quarterback.

3. Jacksonville Jaguars

Quarterback situation

Unlike numerous teams throughout the NFL, they have their guy in Trevor Lawrence – that certainty cemented by the five-year, $275 million extension he signed in June, tied for the second-largest contract in league history while linking him to the club through the 2030 season.

But there's a flip side to that stability given Lawrence has yet to live up to his billing as the top pick of the 2021 draft, when he was hyped as a prospect bound to make an impact on par with John Elway or Peyton Manning. Not only has that not happened – Lawrence has been a Pro Bowler one time and taken the Jags to the playoffs once – but injuries have undercut his performance the past two seasons.

After his rookie year was squandered by Urban Meyer, Lawrence generally played better under Pederson. But the next coach must certainly find a way to truly unlock his potential.

The backup situation will need to addressed anew with Mac Jones headed for free agency.

Roster

Regardless of how one assesses Lawrence, there is a nice nucleus here. Rookie Brian Thomas Jr. was a breakout star on a receiver corps that already boasted Christian Kirk and TE Evan Engram. The defense is stocked with a first-rate pass rusher in Josh Hines-Allen and promising youngsters like Travon Walker, Devin Lloyd and Tyson Campbell. Work needs to be done in the trenches, and the rushing attack in particular never really got on track in 2024.

A talent deficit is not a major issue in Duval County even if, overall, the whole has seemingly been less than the sum of the parts here for some time.

Salary cap

Barring any significant roster adjustments – Kirk has occasionally been involved in trade rumors, for example – the Jags should have about $35 million available, which puts them in the middle of the pack leaguewide.

2025 draft

Not only does Jacksonville have a top-five pick – No. 5 to be exact – that can be earmarked for the best available player, it has 10 selections overall, which should allow for great flexibility to maneuver around the board, if not an opportunity to simply bring in more young talent.

Outlook

This team is only two years removed from winning the AFC South and reaching the divisional round of the playoffs. It nearly won the division again in 2023 despite a rash of injuries. There's plenty to like here, from the players to the local golf courses.

Yet one intriguing element is the ongoing employment of GM Trent Baalke, who is about to work with his fifth different head coach (interim included) since he joined the front office in 2020. Pederson's successor will have to take that for what it's worth, but it's hard to ignore the power dynamic.

4. New York Jets

Quarterback situation

So much to unpack here … or pack.

Coming off a hugely disappointing year, Aaron Rodgers has been less than forthcoming about his future plans but is under contract for 2025 (and so is backup Tyrod Taylor). Talented former Florida State star Jordan Travis effectively took a medical redshirt during his rookie year as he continues to work his way back from the grisly ankle injury that ended his Seminoles career late in the 2023 season.

Could be a lot of moving parts here … and there could just as easily be none.

Roster

Recently fired GM Joe Douglas brought plenty of talent into this building – and plenty of players favored by Rodgers – but it never got the Jets close to breaking the league's longest playoff drought, which now stands at 14 seasons.

The high point of Douglas' tenure was a 2022 draft class that includes CB Sauce Gardner, WR Garrett Wilson – both rookies of the year on their respective sides of the ball – Pro Bowl OLB Jermaine Johnson II and RB Breece Hall. In yet another tricky obstacle course for the Jets' next brain trust to navigate, all are eligible for extensions this year – though Wilson was the only one of the quartet to play close to his ability in 2024. Johnson missed most of the season with a torn Achilles.

Brothers Quinnen and Quincy Williams have been defensive mainstays, and pass rusher Will McDonald IV had a breakthrough in his sophomore season. The offensive line improved yet will field two new tackles in 2025 with Tyron Smith and Morgan Moses out of contract. CB D.J. Reed is the Jets' best player poised to hit the open market.

Midseason acquisition Davante Adams, 32, generally played well given the circumstances, but it would be a surprise if his future isn't tied to Rodgers'. Adams' contract would have to be adjusted if he remains given he's out of guarantees, and his base salary spikes

to $35.7 million each of the next two seasons.

Salary cap

As matters stand now, the Jets have nearly $30 million in cap room. But given the uncertainty around Rodgers, Adams and probably others, that figure seems bound to be fluid.

2025 draft

They'll select seventh overall in Round 1 – but in a year with an unimpressive quarterback crop. They own the Lions' third-rounder (96th overall) ... but surrendered their own – which comes 23 spots earlier – to acquire Adams in October.

Outlook

Quite obviously, a very mixed bag – one with the potential for an instant about-face given the talent quotient if not necessarily set up for the restart a new coach and general manager might prefer. From a cap standpoint, it probably makes sense to retain Rodgers – if he even wants to play – given how difficult it will be to obtain anyone worthy of promoting as the next quarterbacking savior in 2025. Yet Rodgers' presence would doubtless be problematic for a new regime trying to lay the groundwork for sustained success, which will be inherently difficult given the impatient nature and problematic reputation that continues to dog owner Woody Johnson – though he is unfailingly willing to invest resources into his wayward football team. Buyer enjoy and buyer beware.

Aaron Rodgers may be back with the Jets. He is shown after he led them to a 32-20 victory Sunday against the Dolphins. KEVIN R. WEXLER/NORTHJERSEY.COM

5. New Orleans Saints

Quarterback situation

Meh? Since coming to the Big Easy in 2023, Derek Carr has pretty much been what he was with the Raiders – solid, steady ... unspectacular. He's essentially exemplified the league average, going 14-13 in 27 starts with the Saints and posting a 98.8 QB rating that's seven points better than his mark with the Raiders. It's a decent body of work, especially considering some of the protection problems Carr has had and a steady rate of injuries affecting him (he missed seven games in 2024) and his receiver corps.

It's also not exactly what New Orleans was hoping for after signing Carr to a four-year, $150 million contract – the franchise trying to restore itself as an NFC South power after wallowing around .500 following Drew Brees' retirement in the aftermath of the 2020 season. Yet it's been status quo at best with Carr, the club still mired in a rut and failing again to qualify for its first playoff game since Brees and Co. were ousted four years ago.

Youngsters Spencer Rattler, 24, and Jake Haener, 25, struggled while getting shots to play when Carr was unavailable. Rattler's intriguing potential dates to his high school days and sometimes-promising tenures at the University of Oklahoma and University of South Carolina. The rookie was the first quarterback drafted last year outside the first round (Round 5) and didn't exactly get to play with a full deck given the Saints' heap of injury issues.

New Orleans is scheduled to pick ninth in the first round of this year's draft in April. Cutting Carr would mean a $50 million dead cap hit but would spare the Saints from paying his base salary, which balloons from $1.2 million in 2024 to $30 million next season and $50 million in 2026. It would also stand to reason that a new coach, especially an offensively minded one, probably would prefer to chart a course that doesn't include Carr in what would likely be a temporary role.

Roster

Several name brands here – LB Demario Davis, DE Cam Jordan and RB Alvin Kamara among them. But aside from Kamara, who recently signed a two-year extension, they're all pretty much in concerning decline. GM Mickey Loomis admitted after Dennis Allen's midseason firing that the former head coach been victimized by "an avalanche of injuries."

The future foundation will seemingly be comprised of relative youngsters such as DT Bryan Bresee, LT Taliese Fuaga, DE Carl Granderson, C Erik McCoy, CB Kool-Aid McKinstry, WR Chris Olave, G Cesar Ruiz, WR Rashid Shaheed, DB Alontae Taylor and LB Pete Werner. It doesn't necessarily seem like a nascent powerhouse, yet it's also far from an empty cupboard.

Salary cap

No team runs up the NFL version of credit card debt like this one, and it could be an important consideration for anyone who chooses to team with Loomis, who just finished his 23rd season with the small-market franchise and is currently the league's longest-serving general manager. The Saints typically spread out contractual cap hits by adding void years to player contracts. New Orleans is presently more than $50 million overspent in 2025 – the largest figure in the league by orders of magnitude – and that's *before* incurring the potential hit that would be created by parting with Carr. The team typically does a series of significant restructures and/or releases every March to become cap compliant, but that can handcuff the Saints once free agency begins in earnest. DE Chase Young, who signed a one-year, $13 million pact, was the only significant addition in 2024.

Raiders wide receiver Jakobi Meyers had his first 1,000-yard season in 2024. STEPHEN R. SYLVANIE/IMAGN IMAGES

2025 draft

Their organic picks mean they'll select in the top 10 in each of the first four rounds. Trading CB Marshon Lattimore at midseason also upped the arsenal nicely, the Pro Bowler netting an extra third- and fourth-rounder in a deal with the Commanders. The added capital at least provides flexibility if Loomis opts to pursue a passer.

Outlook

When you're talking about one of 32 jobs, prospective candidates are unlikely to turn their noses up at this one. There's enough to like and (currently) a stable enough front office and ownership situation that the next man up should get a decent runway to flourish. Few fans are as passionate as New Orleans', and the civic bond to the organization was only strengthened by Hurricane Katrina. This job may rate lower among the vacancies, but that doesn't mean it's one to run from.

6. Las Vegas Raiders

Quarterback situation

If you've got five, as the Silver and Black did at the end of their season, the problem is self-evident.

Aidan O'Connell, Desmond Ridder and rookie Carter Bradley wound up on the active roster with Gardner Minshew II on injured reserve and Jake Luton on the practice squad. Statistically, the Raiders actually had a middling passing game in 2024, if only because of a complete inability to run the ball.

But it was also patently obvious why they coveted Jayden Daniels in last year's draft. O'Connell has shown enough to be a bridge to the future and maybe a long-term backup – roles that Minshew has capably executed. But barring the pursuit of, say, Sam Darnold, difficult to discern where a 2025 solution is emanating from.

Roster

Brock Bowers had the best season from a numbers standpoint of any rookie tight end in NFL history and should be part of this foundation for some time. The offensive line is solid, WR Jakobi Meyers had his first 1,000-yard season, and DE Maxx Crosby is one of the league's true game wreckers when he's on the field – which wasn't the case in recent weeks due to an ankle injury. DT Christian Wilkins only appeared in five games after signing a huge contract in free agency. Tyree Wilson, the No. 7 pick in 2023, hasn't made an impact.

GM Tom Telesco has ample work ahead of him and probably has to at least consider trade offers for Crosby, who has in many ways become the face of the franchise but has also grown tired of losing. His value is unlikely to get any higher.

Salary cap

Telesco will have more than $100 million for free agency – only the Patriots are expected to have more spending power – which could make the Raiders a player for someone like Darnold if he becomes available and certainly opens up many additional possibilities.

2025 draft

With the Jets' third-rounder at his disposal, Telesco has four of the top 73 selections, including No. 6 overall – though there appear to be three QB-needy teams ahead of him (Titans, Browns, Giants). Regardless, the Raiders could be in striking distance of passers like Cam Ward and Shedeur Sanders ... if they want to be.

Outlook

If this franchise is indeed turning around, it's reversing course with the speed of an aircraft carrier (which isn't quickly for you non-sailors).

The next coach will be Las Vegas' fifth, interim ones included, over a five-season period, so stability has certainly been lacking.

And it will be interesting to see what role is assumed by Brady, now a minority stakeholder in the organization and who seems likely to be influential in terms of philosophical and personnel input.

Pierce consistently got this team to play hard, but the horsepower just hasn't been there. And re-establishing a "Commitment to Excellence" will likely only get harder with the Raiders left by the wayside while the other three teams in the AFC West move forward into the playoffs, the Chargers and Broncos well ahead on their reboots and pursuit of the champion Chiefs.

But at least initial expectations here should be manageable ... theoretically.

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NOTICES
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250105 - Comprehensive HVAC (2 Part with JOC)
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NOTICES
LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

In re NUVO GROUP USA INC., *et al.*,[1] Debtors. | Chapter 11 Case No. 24-11880 (MFW) (Jointly Administered)

NOTICE OF DEADLINES TO FILE CERTAIN CLAIMS

To all persons or entities with claims against the above-captioned debtors and debtors in possession with EIN numbers ending in 2727, 5756, and 3811 (the "Debtors"). On August 22, 2024 (the "Petition Date"), the Debtors filed voluntary chapter 11 petitions in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware (the "Court").

By order dated January 2, 2025, (the "Bar Date Order"), the Court established claim filing deadlines as follows: (i) all persons or entities with a claim against the Debtors that arose before the Petition Date, no matter how remote or contingent, **MUST FILE A PROOF OF CLAIM** on or before **February 3, 2025, 5:00 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time)**; and (ii) governmental units **MUST FILE A PROOF OF CLAIM** on or before **February 18, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time)**. A claim must be submitted **so as to be actually received** on or before the applicable deadline to be deemed timely. Further, all persons or entities with an administrative expense claim against the Debtors arising between the Petition Date and entry of the Bar Date Order **MUST FILE A REQUEST FOR PAYMENT OF SUCH ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE CLAIM** pursuant to section 503 of the Bankruptcy Code on or before **February 3, 2025, 5:00 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time)**.

Copies of the Bar Date Order, the Debtors' schedules of assets and liabilities and other documents and information regarding the Debtors' chapter 11 cases is available free of charge at https://dm.epiq11.com/case/nuvogroup/info or by email at NuvoGroup@epiqglobal.com. Consult the Bar Date Order for additional details on whether you are required to file a proof of claim, as well as instructions and procedures for completing and filing proofs of claim. Do not contact the Clerk of Court for legal advice.

All Proofs of Claim submitted by or on behalf of an individual based on the use of the Debtors' medical devices, any supporting documentation submitted with the forms, and any copies thereof (collectively, the "Personal Information") will be (1) held and treated as ***highly confidential*** by the (i) Debtors, (ii) the Debtors' advisors, including their counsel and financial advisor, and (iii) Epiq, and will only be provided upon request, on a professional eyes only basis, to (A) counsel to any statutory committee appointed in these chapter 11 cases, and (B) such other persons as the Court determines should have the Personal Information (the parties listed in the foregoing subclauses (A-B) collectively, the "Authorized Parties") but only after the Authorized Parties agree to keep the Personal Information confidential, subject to the right of any claimant submitting Personal Information to be heard with respect to such disclosure, and (2) shall not be made available to the public. The Debtors shall provide notice of any such disclosure to the applicable claimant ten (10) days prior to such disclosure with an opportunity for such claimant to object. In the event the claimant objects, and such objection remains unresolved, the Debtors may schedule the dispute for a hearing before the Court. All Claim Forms that are not clearly submitted by or on behalf of an individual asserting a claim related to the Debtors' medical devices will be made publicly available on Epiq's website in their entirety.

ANY PERSON OR ENTITY REQUIRED TO TIMELY ASSERT A CLAIM ON OR BEFORE THE APPLICABLE BAR DATE, BUT FAILS TO DO SO WILL NOT BE TREATED AS A CREDITOR WITH RESPECT TO SUCH CLAIM FOR THE PURPOSE OF VOTING AND DISTRIBUTION IN THESE CHAPTER 11 CASES ON ACCOUNT OF SUCH CLAIM AND WILL BE BARRED, ESTOPPED, AND ENJOINED FROM ASSERTING THEIR CLAIMS AGAINST THE DEBTORS.

BY ORDER OF THE COURT

[1] The Debtors in these chapter 11 cases, along with the last four digits of each of their respective federal tax identification numbers, are: Nuvo Group USA, Inc. (2727), Holdco Nuvo D.G Ltd. (5756), and Nuvo Group Ltd. (3811). The Debtors' mailing address for purposes of these Chapter 11 Cases is Nuvo Group USA, Inc., c/o Epiq Corporate Restructuring, LLC, P.O. Box 4421, Beaverton, OR 97076-4421.

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FOR THE RECORD

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NFL

Wild card matchups
Saturday's Games
L.A. Chargers at Houston, 4:30 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Baltimore, 8 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Denver at Buffalo, 1 p.m.
Green Bay at Philadelphia, 4:30 p.m.
Washington at Tampa Bay, 8 p.m.
Monday's Game
Minnesota at L.A. Rams, 8 p.m.

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	27	10	.730	–
N.Y. Knicks	24	13	.649	3
Philadelphia	14	20	.412	11½
Brooklyn	13	23	.361	13½
Toronto	8	28	.222	18½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	22	16	.579	–
Miami	18	17	.514	2½
Atlanta	19	18	.514	2½
Charlotte	8	27	.229	12½
Washington	6	28	.176	14

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	31	4	.886	–
Milwaukee	18	16	.529	12½
Indiana	19	18	.514	13
Detroit	18	18	.500	13½
Chicago	17	19	.472	14½

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	24	12	.667	–
Memphis	24	13	.649	½
Dallas	21	16	.568	3½
San Antonio	18	18	.500	6
New Orleans	7	30	.189	17½

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	30	5	.857	–
Denver	20	15	.571	10
Minnesota	19	17	.528	11½
Portland	12	23	.343	18
Utah	9	26	.257	21

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	20	16	.556	–
L.A. Lakers	20	16	.556	–
Golden State	18	18	.500	2
Sacramento	18	19	.486	2½
Phoenix	16	19	.457	3½

Tuesday's Scores
Charlotte 115, Phoenix 104
Houston 135, Washington 112
Dallas 118, L.A. Lakers 97
Minnesota 104, New Orleans 97
Atlanta 124, Utah 121
Boston 118, Denver 106
Miami 114, Golden State 98
Wednesday's Games
Oklahoma City at Cleveland
Chicago at Indiana
Washington at Philadelphia
Detroit at Brooklyn
Toronto at N.Y. Knicks
Portland at New Orleans
L.A. Clippers at Denver
San Antonio at Milwaukee
Thursday's Games
Toronto at Cleveland, 7 p.m.
Golden State at Detroit, 7 p.m.
Minnesota at Orlando, 7 p.m.
Houston at Memphis, 8 p.m.
Portland at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
Miami at Utah, 9 p.m.
Atlanta at Phoenix, 9 p.m.
Charlotte at L.A. Lakers, 10:30 p.m.
Friday's Games
Golden State at Indiana, 7 p.m.
Milwaukee at Orlando, 7 p.m.
New Orleans at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Sacramento at Boston, 7:30 p.m.
Oklahoma City at N.Y. Knicks, 7:30 p.m.
Washington at Chicago, 8 p.m.
Brooklyn at Denver, 9 p.m.
Saturday's Games
Houston at Atlanta, 3 p.m.
Utah at Phoenix, 5 p.m.
Toronto at Detroit, 7 p.m.
Memphis at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
Miami at Portland, 10 p.m.
Charlotte at L.A. Clippers, 10:30 p.m.
San Antonio at L.A. Lakers, 10:30 p.m.
Sunday's Games
Denver at Dallas, 3 p.m.
Milwaukee at N.Y. Knicks, 3 p.m.
Sacramento at Chicago, 3:30 p.m.
New Orleans at Boston, 6 p.m.
Oklahoma City at Washington, 6 p.m.
Indiana at Cleveland, 6 p.m.
Philadelphia at Orlando, 6 p.m.
Brooklyn at Utah, 8 p.m.
Charlotte at Phoenix, 9 p.m.

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Toronto	27	13	2	56	132	115
Florida	24	15	2	50	136	127
Boston	20	18	5	45	111	135
Tampa Bay	21	15	2	44	140	107
Ottawa	19	17	3	41	114	114
Montreal	19	18	3	41	122	136
Detroit	18	18	4	40	110	128
Buffalo	15	21	5	35	126	140

Metropolitan Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	26	10	4	56	148	108
New Jersey	25	15	3	53	137	109
Carolina	24	15	2	50	137	117
Columbus	18	17	6	42	141	148
Pittsburgh	17	17	8	42	128	156
Philadelphia	17	19	5	39	125	147
N.Y. Rangers	18	20	2	38	117	128
N.Y. Islanders	15	18	7	37	108	128

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Central Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	28	12	2	58	152	106
Minnesota	26	11	4	56	127	111
Dallas	25	13	1	51	128	99
Colorado	25	15	1	51	140	131
St. Louis	19	19	4	42	118	129
Utah	17	15	7	41	113	118
Nashville	13	21	7	33	100	128
Chicago	13	25	2	28	102	137

Pacific Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	28	9	3	59	143	107
Edmonton	25	12	3	53	132	109
L.A. Kings	23	10	5	51	118	96
Vancouver	18	12	9	45	120	126
Calgary	19	14	7	45	108	122
Anaheim	17	18	5	39	103	121
Seattle	17	21	3	37	118	130
San Jose	13	24	6	32	112	153

NOTE: Two points for a win, one for OT loss.
Tuesday's Scores
Edmonton 4, Boston 0
Detroit 3, Ottawa 2, OT
Dallas 5, N.Y. Rangers 4, OT
Columbus 4, Pittsburgh 3, SO
Tampa Bay 3, Carolina 2
Toronto 3, Philadelphia 2
Minnesota 6, St. Louis 4
Winnipeg 5, Nashville 2
Calgary 3, Anaheim 2, OT
Vegas 4, San Jose 2
Wednesday's Games
Vancouver at Washington
Colorado at Chicago
Florida at Utah
Calgary at L.A. Kings
Thursday's Games
Buffalo at Ottawa, 7 p.m.
Boston at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.
New Jersey at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m.
Dallas at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Edmonton at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Seattle at Columbus, 7 p.m.
Toronto at Carolina, 7:30 p.m.
Anaheim at St. Louis, 8 p.m.
Colorado at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
N.Y. Islanders at Vegas, 10 p.m.
Friday's Games
Chicago at Detroit, 7 p.m.
Montreal at Washington, 7 p.m.
Vancouver at Carolina, 7 p.m.
L.A. Kings at Winnipeg, 8 p.m.
San Jose at Utah, 9 p.m.

DEALS

FOOTBALL
National Football League
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS – DT Adam Gotsis practice squad addition to Tampa Bay Buccaneers. T Jack Wilson signed.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS – C Sincere Haynesworth signed to Arizona Cardinals.
NEW YORK JETS – RB Zonovan Knight signed to Arizona Cardinals.
WASHINGTON COMMANDERS – T Max Pircher practice squad addition. DT Haggai Ndubuisi practice squad deletion.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

AFCA final 2024 FCS Coaches Poll, presented by Hudl

School (1sts)	W-L	Pts	LW
1. N. Dakota State (16)	14-2	575	4
2. Montana State	15-1	552	1
3. South Dakota State	12-3	529	2
4. South Dakota	11-3	507	3
5. UC Davis	11-3	480	5
6. Incarnate Word	11-3	448	6
7. Mercer	11-3	418	9
8. Idaho	10-4	402	8
9. Villanova	10-4	351	11
10. Illinois State	10-4	350	10
11. Rhode Island	11-3	336	12
12. Tarleton State	10-4	307	14
13. Montana	9-5	288	13
14. Abilene Christian	9-5	252	17
15. Jackson State	12-2	249	15
16. Richmond	10-3	238	7
17. Southeast Missouri St	9-4	223	16
18. UT Martin	9-5	173	20
19. Tennessee State	9-4	139	19
20. South Carolina State	9-3	127	18
21. Lehigh	9-4	113	NR
22. Northern Arizona	8-5	102	22
23. Missouri State	8-4	73	21
24. New Hampshire	8-5	55	24
25. Eastern Kentucky	8-5	51	NR

Dropped out: North Carolina Central (23), Duquesne (25)
Others receiving votes: North Carolina Central, 30; Drake, 29; Central Connecticut State, 28; Stony Brook, 15; Duquesne, 14; Dartmouth, 7; Columbia, 6; Harvard, 5; Southeastern Louisiana, 5.

SOCCER

English Premier League

	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Liverpool	19	14	4	1	47	19	46
Arsenal	20	11	7	2	39	18	40
Nott'm Forest	20	12	4	4	29	19	40
Chelsea	20	10	6	4	39	24	36
Newcastle	20	10	5	5	34	22	35
Man City	20	10	4	6	36	27	34
Bournemouth	20	9	6	5	30	23	33
Aston Villa	20	9	5	6	30	32	32
Fulham	20	7	9	4	30	27	30
Brighton	20	6	10	4	30	29	28
Brentford	20	8	3	9	38	35	27
Tottenham	20	7	3	10	42	30	24
West Ham	20	6	5	9	24	39	23
Man United	20	6	5	9	23	28	23
Crystal Palace	20	4	9	7	21	28	21
Everton	19	3	8	8	15	25	17
Wolverhampton	20	4	4	12	31	45	16
Ipswich Town	20	3	7	10	20	35	16
Leicester City	20	3	5	12	23	44	14
Southampton	20	1	3	16	12	44	6

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.
Tuesday's Games
Brentford vs. Manchester City, 2:30 p.m.
Chelsea vs. AFC Bournemouth, 2:30 p.m.
West Ham vs. Fulham, 2:30 p.m.
Nottingham Forest vs. Liverpool, 3 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 15
Everton vs. Aston Villa, 2:30 p.m.
Leicester City vs. Crystal Palace, 2:30 p.m.
Newcastle vs. Wolverhampton, 2:30 p.m.
Arsenal vs. Tottenham, 3 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 16
Ipswich Town vs. Brighton, 2:30 p.m.
Manchester United vs. Southampton, 3 p.m.

GOLF

PGA Tour Schedule
Jan. 2-5 – The Sentry (Hideki Matsuyama)
Jan. 9-12 – Sony Open in Hawaii, Honolulu
Jan. 16-19 – The American Express, La Quinta, Calif.
Jan. 22-25 – Farmers Insurance Open, La Jolla, Calif.
Jan. 30-Feb. 2 – AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, Pebble Beach, Calif.
Feb. 6-9 – WM Phoenix Open, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Feb. 13-16 – The Genesis Invitational, Pacific Palisades, Calif.
Feb. 20-23 – Mexico Open at VidantaWorld, Vallarta, Mexico
Feb. 27-March 2 – Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches, Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.
March 6-9 – Arnold Palmer Invitational presented by Mastercard, Orlando, Fla.
March 6-9 – Puerto Rico Open, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico
March 13-16 – The Players Championship, Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.
March 20-23 – Valspar Championship, Palm Harbor, Fla.
March 27-30 – Texas Children's Houston Open, Houston
April 3-6 – Valero Texas Open, San Antonio, Texas
April 10-13 – Masters Tournament, Augusta, Ga.
April 17-20 – Corales Puntacana Championship, Punta Cana, Dominican Republic
April 17-20 – RBC Heritage, Hilton Head Island, SC
April 24-27 – Zurich Classic of New Orleans, Avondale, La.
May 1-4 – The CJ Cup Byron Nelson, McKinney, Texas
May 8-11 – Myrtle Beach Classic, Myrtle Beach, SC
May 8-11 – Truist Championship, Montgomery, Pa.
May 15-18 – PGA Championship, Charlotte, NC
May 22-25 – Charles Schwab Challenge, Fort Worth, Texas
May 29-June 1 – The Memorial Tournament presented by Workday, Dublin, Ohio
June 5-8 – RBC Canadian Open, Caledon, Canada

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NFL
Saturday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
LA Chargers	3	42.5	HOUSTON
BALTIMORE	9.5	43.5	Pittsburgh

Sunday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
BUFFALO	8.5	47	Denver
PHILADELPHIA	4.5	45	Green Bay
TAMPA BAY	3	50.5	Washington

Monday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
Minnesota	1	47.5	LA RAMS

College football
Thursday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
Notre Dame	1	45	PENN STATE

Friday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
Ohio State	5.5	53	TEXAS

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BASKETBALL

No men's unbeaten: Gators blow out Vols

The Florida Gators bounced back from their first loss of the college men's basketball season with a strong statement on Tuesday.

No. 8 Florida defeated No. 1 Tennessee in emphatic fashion with a 73-43 victory at Exactech Arena at the Stephen C. O'Connell Center in Gainesville. Florida (14-1, 1-1 SEC) knocked off the last remaining unbeaten team in college men's basketball, with Tennessee falling to 14-1 (1-1 SEC).

The Gators started the game on a 12-0 run and never looked back, holding a 34-15 lead in the first half. The second half for Florida was more of the same, as it built a game-high lead of 36 points (64-28) with 5:55 remaining in the contest.

Alijah Martin led the Gators with 18 points and six rebounds, while Denzel Aberdeen added 16 points and Alex Condon added 12. Zakai Zeigler and Chaz Lanier scored 10 points apiece to lead the Vols.

Florida was coming off a 106-100 loss on Saturday on the road against No. 11 Kentucky.

Tennessee was limited to 21% (12 of 56) shooting from the field, including 4 of 29 shooting from 3-point range. The Vols avoided the worst loss by a No. 1 team with a run late in the contest. No. 2 Kentucky beat No. 1 St. John's by 41 in 1951 for the biggest margin of victory.

The Volunteers were coming off a 76-52 win over Arkansas to match the best start in program history (1922-23).

Tennessee's previous low this season was 64 points in a 64-42 victory over Virginia on Nov. 21. This is the Vols' lowest point since a 46-43 win over Auburn on Feb. 4, 2023.

– Ehsan Kassim, USA TODAY NETWORK

Zion Williamson's windmill dunk highlights return from injury

For the first time in more than two months, Zion Williamson took the court Tuesday night with a healthy hamstring.

The New Orleans Pelicans forward had missed the last 27 games after suffering the injury in a Nov. 6 game against the Cleveland Cavaliers.

In Tuesday night's 104-97 loss to the Minnesota Timberwolves, Williamson played 28 minutes, scored 22 points and pulled down six rebounds.

He also showed that his athletic style and power are still intact during a sequence in the third quarter in which he made a steal at midcourt and then threw down a ferocious 360-degree dunk.

Williamson, 24, has had an injury-plagued start to his NBA career ever since the Pelicans selected him first overall in the 2019 draft. He played just 24 games in his rookie season due to a knee injury.

In an abundance of caution, New Orleans coach Willie Green said Williamson will have his playing time limited until he's fully recovered.

– Steve Gardner, USA TODAY

WEATHER

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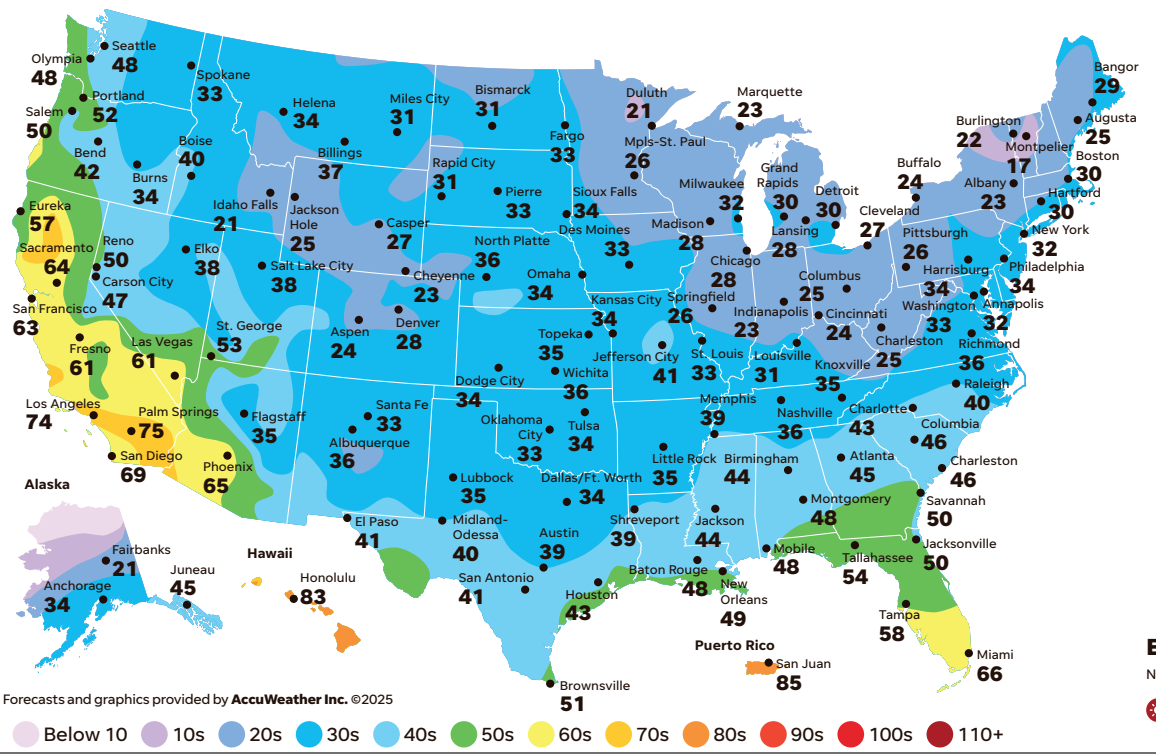
TODAY'S FORECAST

A winter storm will affect the **South Central** states today. Snow is forecast to expand from eastern **New Mexico** through the **Texas** Panhandle and into **Oklahoma**. A corridor of snow, sleet and rain may occur just north of Austin, **Texas**, to Dallas, southern **Arkansas** and northern **Louisiana**. There may also be a small window where freezing rain can occur, leading to dangerous travel on untreated roads.

A little snow can also fall from the Front Range of **Colorado** into the northern and central Great **Plains**. Plain rain is expected along the **Texas** and **Louisiana** coasts.

Otherwise, much of the rest of country will be dry with the exception of some lake-effect snow lingering in upstate **New York** and northwestern **Pennsylvania**. The risk of fast-moving, wind-driven infernos will continue in Southern **California**.

TODAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



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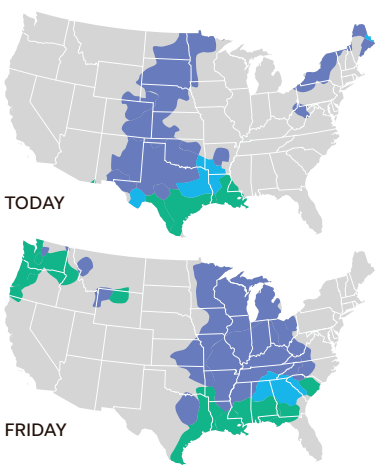
PRECIPITATION FORECAST



EXTREMES

Note: For contiguous 48 states through 3 p.m. ET yesterday

HOTTEST: 74° Oceanside, Calif.
COLDEST: -25° Antero Reservoir, Colo.

TOP TRAVEL CITIES Air quality index (AQI)

ATLANTA
THU Sunny 45/29
FRI An icy mix 35/32
SAT Cold 39/24
AQI Moderate

BALTIMORE
THU Windy, cold 32/18
FRI Clouding up 34/25
SAT A little snow 36/23
AQI Good

BOSTON
THU Flurries 30/25
FRI Not as cold 37/26
SAT Snow showers 32/28
AQI Good

CHARLOTTE
THU Sunny, chilly 43/23
FRI A wintry mix 38/31
SAT Turning sunny 45/22
AQI Moderate

CHICAGO
THU Partly sunny 28/22
FRI A bit of snow 30/22
SAT Mostly cloudy 31/24
AQI Moderate

DALLAS/FT. WORTH
THU Snow, sleet 34/31
FRI Some A.M. snow 40/27
SAT Mostly sunny 49/32
AQI Moderate

DENVER
THU A little snow 28/12
FRI Not as cold 37/27
SAT Breezy 37/16
AQI Moderate

DETROIT
THU Sunny 30/19
FRI A bit of snow 28/25
SAT Low clouds 32/21
AQI Moderate

HONOLULU
THU Showers around 83/70
FRI Showers around 82/69
SAT Showers around 83/70
AQI Good

HOUSTON
THU Becoming rainy 43/36
FRI A little rain 42/31
SAT Sunny, warmer 55/38
AQI Good

LAS VEGAS
THU Sunny, breezy 61/38
FRI Mostly sunny 58/37
SAT Plenty of sun 61/36
AQI Moderate

LOS ANGELES
THU Hazy sunshine 74/49
FRI Sunny 72/46
SAT Sunny 68/46
AQI Unhealthy s/g

MIAMI
THU Plenty of sun 66/51
FRI Warmer 76/65
SAT Clouding up 79/59
AQI Good

MPLS-ST. PAUL
THU A bit of snow 26/22
FRI A.M. flurries 26/13
SAT Cloudy 24/19
AQI Moderate

NEW ORLEANS
THU A little rain 49/47
FRI Rain, windy 58/37
SAT Clearing 49/37
AQI Good

NEW YORK
THU Windy 32/26
FRI Not as cold 39/29
SAT A bit of snow 35/29
AQI Moderate

ORLANDO
THU Sunny, cool 57/39
FRI Warmer 71/57
SAT A little rain 62/45
AQI Good

PHILADELPHIA
THU Windy 34/24
FRI Breezy 36/27
SAT A bit of snow 36/26
AQI Good

PHOENIX
THU Sunny 65/46
FRI Sunny 65/40
SAT Sunny 64/41
AQI Unhealthy s/g

SALT LAKE CITY
THU Plenty of sun 38/22
FRI Turning cloudy 38/30
SAT Snow, 1-2" 37/28
AQI Moderate

SAN DIEGO
THU Plenty of sun 69/46
FRI Plenty of sun 69/46
SAT Sunny 63/43
AQI Unhealthy s/g

SAN FRANCISCO
THU Sunny 63/45
FRI Mostly sunny 60/46
SAT Mostly sunny 61/45
AQI Moderate

SEATTLE
THU Partly sunny 48/41
FRI Morning rain 50/38
SAT Mostly cloudy 47/40
AQI Moderate

WASHINGTON
THU Windy, cold 33/20
FRI Cold 33/27
SAT A little snow 38/25
AQI Unhealthy s/g

c Cloudy **f** Fog **i** Ice **r** Rain **sf** Snowflurries **sn** Snow **w** Windy **dr** Drizzle **h** Haze **pc** Partly cloudy **s** Sunny **sh** Showers **t** Thunderstorms

U.S. CITIES

	TODAY	FRI
Akron, Ohio	25/11pc	23/21sf
Albany, N.Y.	23/17w	29/20pc
Albuquerque	36/21c	41/21s
Allentown, Pa.	31/18w	34/24s
Amarillo, Texas	33/21sn	39/22pc
Anaheim, Calif.	76/51h	75/41s
Anchorage, Alaska	34/30sn	40/31sn
Aspen, Colo.	24/-7pc	25/12s
Atlantic City, N.J.	34/23w	37/31w
Augusta, Ga.	48/22s	40/33i
Austin, Texas	39/34r	44/27c
Bakersfield, Calif.	63/38s	67/38s
Baton Rouge, La.	48/41r	44/36r
Billings, Mont.	37/21s	40/32pc
Birmingham, Ala.	44/30pc	38/29i
Bismarck, N.D.	31/16sn	25/18c
Boise, Idaho	40/26s	40/28c
Buffalo, N.Y.	24/14sf	27/23c
Burlington, Vt.	22/18sn	26/17pc
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	29/22pc	30/15sn
Charleston, S.C.	46/26s	45/39r
Charleston, W.Va.	25/3pc	31/27sn
Cheyenne, Wyo.	23/14sn	36/31pc
Cincinnati	24/9s	29/22sn
Cleveland	27/17w	29/24sn
Colorado Springs	31/13sf	36/26s
Columbia, S.C.	46/21s	41/31r
Columbus, Ohio	25/8pc	25/22sn
Corpus Christi, Texas	48/40r	48/34sh
Dayton, Ohio	24/11s	27/22sn
Daytona Beach, Fla.	53/40s	68/58s
Des Moines, Iowa	33/23pc	30/17sf
Duluth, Minn.	21/12c	18/1sf
Durham, N.C.	37/22s	37/31c
El Paso, Texas	41/29sf	46/27s
Fairbanks, Alaska	21/10c	17/8c
Flagstaff, Ariz.	35/15w	45/15s
Fargo, N.D.	33/14sn	20/9s
Fort Myers, Fla.	64/44s	73/62s
Fort Smith, Ark.	31/28sn	37/19sn
Fort Wayne, Ind.	26/15s	27/21sn
Fresno, Calif.	61/38s	64/39s
Grand Rapids, Mich.	30/20c	28/23sn
Green Bay, Wis.	29/20pc	29/15sn
Greensboro, N.C.	36/21s	36/28sf
Greenville, S.C.	43/23s	37/29sn
Harrisburg, Pa.	34/21w	35/27pc
Hartford, Conn.	30/21w	35/23pc
Indianapolis	23/14s	28/21sn
Islip, N.Y.	34/24w	38/25s
Jackson, Miss.	44/35pc	41/32r
Jacksonville, Fla.	50/28s	60/52c
Jefferson City, Mo.	41/29pc	32/17sn
Kansas City	34/24pc	31/11sf
Key West, Fla.	66/59s	73/70pc
Knoxville, Tenn.	35/23s	31/27sn
Laredo, Texas	43/38r	52/33w
Lexington, Ky.	25/11s	31/25sn
Lincoln, Neb.	38/22c	33/18c
Little Rock, Ark.	35/29sn	35/19sn
Long Beach, Calif.	75/48h	73/46s
Louisville, Ky.	31/17s	32/26sn
Lubbock, Texas	35/23sn	41/24c
Madison, Wis.	28/21pc	28/18sn
Manchester, N.H.	28/21w	37/22w
Memphis, Tenn.	39/30pc	33/23sn
Milwaukee	32/24c	31/21sn
Mobile, Ala.	48/40pc	52/35r
Modesto, Calif.	62/35s	61/42s
Montgomery, Ala.	48/33s	41/33r
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	42/24s	42/35r
Nags Head, N.C.	37/27w	36/32w
Nashville, Tenn.	36/28s	34/27sn
Newark, N.J.	35/24w	40/28s
New Haven, Conn.	34/27w	39/25s
Norfolk, Va.	37/25s	38/30pc
Oakland, Calif.	63/41s	61/43s
Oklahoma City	33/27sn	34/19c
Omaha, Neb.	34/21c	31/19c
Palm Springs, Calif.	75/50s	70/46s
Pensacola, Fla.	50/42pc	61/38r
Pierre, S.D.	33/16sn	26/19s
Pittsburgh	26/12pc	25/22c
Portland, Maine	27/19sn	35/19pc
Portland, Ore.	52/38pc	49/42r
Providence, R.I.	30/22w	39/23s
Raleigh, N.C.	40/21s	39/31c
Rapid City, S.D.	31/17sn	37/27s
Reno, Nev.	50/24s	58/26pc
Richmond, Va.	36/14s	36/28pc
Rochester, N.Y.	25/16sf	27/22c
Sacramento, Calif.	64/38s	62/44pc
San Antonio	41/36r	45/28w
San Jose, Calif.	69/42s	68/44s
Santa Fe, N.M.	33/13c	36/18s
Sarasota, Fla.	59/41s	71/65s
Savannah, Ga.	50/27s	47/42r
Scottsdale, Ariz.	62/43s	64/36s
Shreveport, La.	39/33i	39/25c
Sioux Falls, S.D.	34/20sf	26/17pc
South Bend, Ind.	28/19s	29/24sn
Spokane, Wash.	33/27pc	34/27sn
Springfield, Mo.	37/26pc	30/18sn
Springfield, Ill.	26/21pc	29/19sn
St. Louis	33/29s	33/18sn
St. Petersburg, Fla.	57/43s	69/61s
Syracuse, N.Y.	27/11sf	26/18pc
Tallahassee, Fla.	54/31s	59/42r
Tampa, Fla.	58/40s	71/62s
Toledo, Ohio	29/17pc	30/24sn
Topeka, Kan.	35/24pc	33/7sf
Tucson, Ariz.	57/36c	60/32s
Tupelo, Miss.	41/31pc	36/29sn
Tulsa, Okla.	34/28sn	34/20sn
Virginia Beach, Va.	38/27w	39/32w
Wichita, Kan.	36/23pc	31/14sf
Wilmington, Del.	34/21w	35/24s
Winston-Salem, N.C.	36/23s	36/29sf
Worcester, Mass.	26/20w	35/23s

WORLD CITIES

	TODAY	FRI
Beijing	38/13s	39/14h
Buenos Aires	85/72s	84/71pc
Cancun, Mexico	74/66c	81/66c
Dubai, UAE	75/60pc	78/61s
Frankfurt	50/31sh	38/28s
Hong Kong	70/53c	63/52h
Istanbul	60/48h	58/47h
Jerusalem	60/45h	60/45h
Johannesburg	74/60t	77/60t
London	38/26s	36/28c
Mexico City	70/50pc	71/52c
Montreal	21/14sn	21/14pc
Moscow	34/31c	38/36sn
Mumbai, India	89/66h	88/69pc
Paris	51/35sh	38/31sh
Rio de Janeiro	78/72t	79/72pc
Rome	63/52pc	62/44s
Seoul	19/9s	29/11s
Singapore	88/77h	83/75t
Sydney	77/70sh	79/71t
Toronto	23/15pc	30/24c
Tokyo	56/35s	50/35s

Multiple NFL teams reportedly eye UNC's Belichick

Nate Davis
USA TODAY

Is it possible that Bill Belichick won't even be one and done at UNC?

Multiple NFL teams, including the Las Vegas Raiders, according to NFL Media's Tom Pelissero, have checked in with the legendary football coach, who was hired by the University of North Carolina just last month. Tom Brady, who now owns a minority stake of the Raiders and was Belichick's quarterback during the New England Patriots' two-decade dynasty, has been gauging his former coach's interest in an NFL return, according to the report.

Belichick and the Patriots parted ways after 24 years following the 2023 season. He interviewed multiple times with the Atlanta Falcons last year when they were searching for a coach, but they ultimately settled on Raheem Morris. Belichick spent the balance of 2024 working on various media endeavors while remaining around the game in other capacities.

The Raiders fired former coach Antonio Pierce on Tuesday following a 4-13 season, his first full one at the helm. Pierce went 5-4 as the Raiders' interim coach in 2023 after taking over for Josh McDaniels, who was dismissed following an embarrassing loss at Detroit.

New University of North Carolina head coach Bill Belichick has 333 victories as an NFL head coach, second only to Don Shula (347). JIM DEDMON/IMAGN IMAGES

Five other teams are currently without a head coach: the Chicago Bears, Jacksonville Jaguars, New Orleans Saints, New England Patriots and New York Jets. Belichick, twice an interim head coach for the Jets – though he never actually coached a game for them – has even recently remained critical of an organization that was a feckless rival of the Patriots during their reign.

It's not clear which other club or clubs might be pursuing him.

Named the Tar Heels' head man on Dec. 11, Belichick, who's never worked as a college coach, has been putting together his staff ever since. His five-year contract includes a $10 million buyout if he leaves before June.

"I had some good years in the NFL, so that was OK. But this is really kind of a dream come true," Belichick said during his introductory press conference in Chapel Hill on Dec. 12.

Asked at the time about the possibility of an NFL return if circumstances changed, Belichick replied: "I didn't come here to leave."

The Raiders have not replied to a USA TODAY Sports request for a comment as it pertains to their coaching search.

Bell

Continued from Page 1C

been more than three times as likely to be fired after one season (as was the case with Pierce and Mayo) than white coaches. The Rooney Rule, named after former Pittsburgh Steelers owner Dan Rooney, requires teams to interview minority candidates for head coaching jobs and other key positions.

Consider some raw numbers:

- Of the 139 head coaches in the NFL since 2003, 19 (13.7%) were fired after one season in at least one of their stints.
- Of the 111 white coaches during this span, 11 (9.7%) were one-and-done.
- Of the 26 non-white coaches, eight (30.8%) lasted just one season.

No, don't call it a "double" standard. It's more like minority coaches in the NFL have to endure a "triple" standard.

And this doesn't even account for cases where Black coaches were fired after several seasons, such as Lovie Smith and Jim Caldwell, despite posting winning records.

While there are certainly examples of teams that have embodied the spirit of the Rooney Rule, the collective rate of quickly rescinding opportunities for minority coaches is another illustration of how the league is failing on the equality front. Still.

Pierce, promoted nearly a year ago to become the Las Vegas Raiders coach after impressive impact in 2023 as interim coach (5-4), was dumped after a 4-13 finish. First-year general manager Tom Telesco, by the way, has been retained.

Mayo, promoted nearly a year ago from his post as linebackers coach to succeed Bill Belichick as New England Patriots coach, was fired after a 4-13 season. It didn't matter that Patriots owner Robert Kraft, who admitted he placed the rookie coach in an "untenable position" – inheriting a team decidedly thin on talent – created a succession plan in 2023 that contractually designated Mayo as his future coach.

Compare the Pierce and Mayo cases with that of Callahan, who just finished 3-14 in his first year as Tennessee Titans coach. Callahan, too, was a head coach for the first time. Yet the team apparently hasn't blinked in bringing him back.

Antonio Pierce was 9-17, including 5-4 as interim coach in 2023, in 26 games as the head coach of the Raiders. STEPHEN LEW/IMAGN IMAGES

"He was a first-time head coach, and a first-time play-caller," Chad Brinker, the Titans' president of football operations, said Tuesday, his comments published on the team's website. "There are some challenges as a first-time head coach, like building a culture, assessing current and future talent, establishing trust and communication, creating an alignment from the coaching to the front office to ownership."

Hmmm. No knock on Callahan. Good for him. He'll get support and more time. If only Pierce and Mayo were afforded such a luxury.

Brinker added: 'We believe in Brian, and we want to give him the opportunity to grow into the head coach that we think he can be. ... It just takes time to build a program."

Time. Ask the Detroit Lions. Dan Campbell was 3-13-1 in his first season in 2021. By sticking with Campbell and GM Brad Holmes, the Lions have reversed their pattern of futility. The past two seasons, the Lions are 29-8, including the postseason, and they just clinched the No. 1 seed for the upcoming NFC playoffs.

Look at the San Francisco 49ers. They didn't qualify for the playoffs this season but advanced to two Super Bowls in the previous five seasons under Kyle Shanahan. His first two seasons? They were 6-10 and 4-12. He was given time.

Pierce and Mayo, though, weren't given much of a window, benefit of the doubt and obviously the support, to, well, grow into the job as Brinker envisions for Callahan.

Were they set up to fail? It sure looks like it. It's fair to question whether they should have been hired in the first place if they weren't going to get a solid commitment from Kraft and Raiders owner Mark Davis. Neither Pierce nor Mayo had worked before as coordinators. Then again, Callahan, previously the Cincinnati Bengals offensive coordinator, had never called plays before becoming a head coach. So, there's always a certain risk in hiring unproven, first-time coaches. Regardless, time matters.

Meanwhile, the New York Giants have stuck with their first-time coach. Daboll, flanked by GM Joe Schoen, stays after a 3-14 finish in his third season. Giants co-owner John Mara talked this week about his patience wearing thin. But it's not as thin as the patience Pierce and Mayo were not afforded.

Then there's Carthon, fired after compiling a 9-25 record in two seasons as Titans GM. With more time, perhaps he could have matched – or exceeded – the 26-44 mark that Baalke has had in four seasons as Jacksonville Jaguars GM.

Yet he, too, is gone. Baalke survived while the Jaguars fired coach Doug Pederson, who in producing a 4-13 record in 2024 didn't do enough with the roster Jaguars owner Shad Khan hailed as the most talented one he's had during his ownership reign.

Until this week, speculation persisted that both Pederson and Baalke wouldn't be back.

Had Carthon returned, he would have had the No. 1 pick overall in the upcoming NFL draft in his war chest. Now that's an asset for Brinker, who Carthon hired last year as his assistant GM.

It's reminiscent of the fate Steve Wilks encountered during a brief stint with the Arizona Cardinals in 2018. Wilks was gone before the Cardinals could use the No. 1 pick overall in 2019 on Kyler Murray.

The next Patriots coach will inherit a windfall, too, as in $95 million-plus in salary cap space in 2025 – largest in the NFL. Tough timing, I guess, that Mayo didn't get that perk when he followed in Belichick's footsteps.

Carthon, on the other hand, might wonder how he wound up as the odd man out after hiring Brinker and leading the search to hire Callahan just last year. Talk about weird optics. Brinker, who spent 13 years in personnel with the Green Bay Packers, came in under Carthon. Then he was fast-tracked for a promotion. Now Brinker suddenly wields the power to make the final decisions on personnel – and the authority to hire the next GM.

Given NFL trends, it's probably a good bet that he'll get more time to pass or fail than Carthon ever had.

Hayes

Continued from Page 1C

Or the 48-yard touchdown run on quarterback power against Purdue, where he hit the edge and got into the second level and ran away from the defense. Not one defender touched him.

Or completing a pass, then catching a throwback pass, for a 40-yard gain against Purdue. On the same play, while lined up at quarterback.

Or playing center – yes, everyone, center – against Southern California and lined up eligible in the formation, snapping the ball and running a streak down the center of the field. He caught the ball in the end zone while flipping over the safety, yet another 50-50 ball where 6-foot-6, 260 pounds has the advantage.

Because 6-6, 260 always has the advantage. That catch against USC was one of 17 in the game.

That's right, *seventeen*.

Warren has had at least six catches in nine of Penn State's 15 games. He has four 100-yard games and eight touchdowns and is averaging almost 12 yards per catch. He also has four rushing TDs while lining up in the backfield.

Now imagine game-planning this rare weapon in the biggest game of the season.

Boise State tried everything to keep Warren from changing the course of the game, including double teams, rolling coverages, and using ends and linebackers to jam and redirect at the line of scrimmage. Nothing worked when it mattered most, when Boise State couldn't affect the quarterback on critical plays.

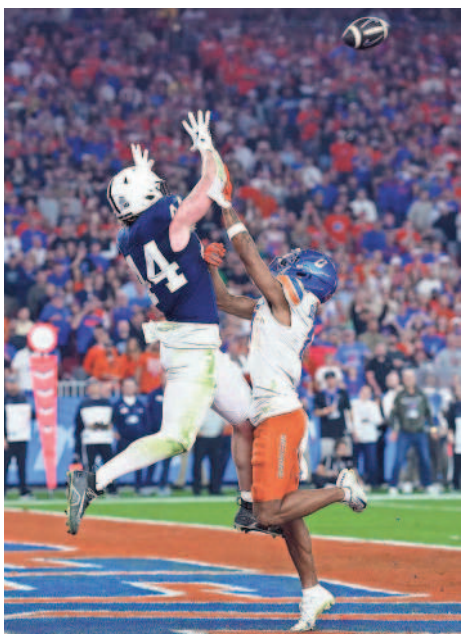
Two plays – two dagger touchdowns – where Warren's size and speed took over. Where the unicorn made a play that only he can.

The first came on Penn State's initial drive of the game, on second-and-long, when Warren had the time to run from the left side of the formation all the way to the right corner of the end zone. Allar threw the ball to a point in the back corner, and Warren outran pass-off zone coverage to go get it.

And deftly tapping his feet inbounds before lumbering out of the end zone.

Later in the third quarter, after Boise State had closed to 17-14 and had momentum, Warren caught another touchdown pass on third-and-long – this time in man coverage, high-pointing an Allar throw in the back of the end zone over safety Ty Benefield for a gut-punch of a score.

Again, gently getting two feet inbounds and completing the catch before crossing the back line.


Penn State tight end Tyler Warren (44) makes a touchdown catch against Boise State in the Fiesta Bowl. JOE CAMPOREALE/IMAGN IMAGES

Now, the problem for Notre Dame: The Irish are just as limited in coverage of Warren. Like everyone else in college football.

But Notre Dame has seven sacks in playoff wins over Indiana and Georgia, and despite size limitations (and injuries) on the defensive line, it has been able to manufacture pressure and affect the quarterback.

Indiana quarterback Kurtis Rourke had an elite season but struggled mightily against the Notre Dame pass rush (and coverage) until the Irish played soft with a 24-point lead. Georgia quarterback Gunner Stockton, making his first career start, played about the same, the Irish constantly harassing and limiting in his impact.

The plan for Notre Dame is the same as the plan for Boise State: affect the quarterback, and affect Warren's chances of changing the game.

Needless to say, it doesn't always work.

"He's not just a big guy who can run. He's long and has a rare catch radius, and he can run right over you," said Boise Sate safety Alexander Tuebner. "He finds ways to make plays no matter how you cover him."

This is your unicorn, everyone. And it's darn near impossible to defend the indefensible.

Matt Hayes is the senior national college football writer for USA TODAY Sports Network. Follow him on X at @MattHayesCFB.

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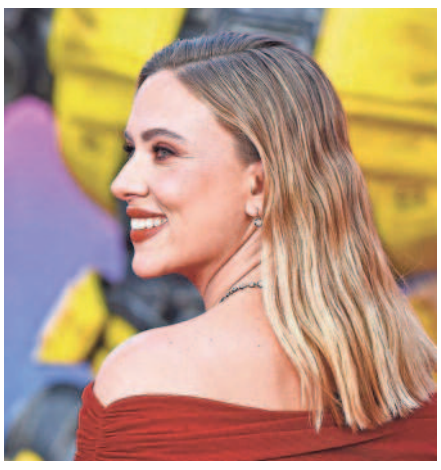
‘Wicked’ and ‘Emilia Pérez’ top SAG Award nominees

The Screen Actors Guild makes its picks in movies and television. **Page 2D**

National Board of Review honors Kidman and Craig

And “Wicked” wins accolades for best film and director at Tuesday’s gala in New York. **Page 4D**

LIFELINE



JOE MAHER/GETTY IMAGES

MAKING WAVES
SCARLETT JOHANSSON

With Hoda Kotb’s exit, there are new co-hosts queued up for the “Today” show’s fourth hour broadcast. Jenna Bush Hager, who has been Kotb’s co-host since 2019, announced Scarlett Johansson will take a turn at the anchor desk for a week starting Jan. 21. The “Black Widow” star is just one in a carousel of celebrities who will guest host the show after Kotb’s official last day Jan. 10. “We have so many fun things planned,” Hager said. Taraji P. Henson, Eva Longoria and Keke Palmer are among the other A-listers set to join Hager. Meanwhile, Kotb teased her next chapter on a visit to “The Kelly Clarkson Show.” She plans to launch a wellness company that includes an app, retreats and podcast.

IT’S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO’S CELEBRATING TODAY

Nina Dobrev is 36. **Princess Kate** is 43. **J.K. Simmons** is 70.

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Aries (March 21-April 19). Reflecting on your past? Prepare for an emotional, but upbeat day.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Putting yourself out there? The moon’s harmonious connection to Mars inspires courage. Advocating for an idea comes naturally.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Feeling secure? Make money moves to insulate yourself from stress as the moon and Mars harmonize.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Aiming to impress? As the moon and Mars harmonize, your lust for life energizes everyone you cross paths with!

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Trusting your business instincts? As the moon and Mars harmonize, going with your gut requires a certain amount of stillness.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Playing well with others? The moon’s harmonious connection to Mars helps you channel restless energy into team efforts!

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Feeling ambitious? You believe nothing is impossible. This attitude takes you far professionally!

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Enjoying a little healthy competition? A worthy opponent inspires you to beat your best!

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Doing away with a bad habit? The moon’s harmonious connection to Mars marks a good day to cut cords!

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Romantic vibes? You’re feeling the love. A connection gets hot and heavy!

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Getting your way? What a pleasant surprise! Limited push-back makes life easier.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Solid self-expression? You instinctively know what to say to get your desires met as the moon and Mars harmonize.

2025 TELEVISION PREVIEW

Millie Bobby Brown returns as Eleven in “Stranger Things.” PROVIDED NETFLIX

Welcome back your favorites

Kelly Lawler USA TODAY

New Year, lots of great old TV. ● In the streaming TV era, there can be years between seasons of some of our favorite TV shows, like Netflix hit “Stranger Things” or Marvel superhero show “Daredevil” or even PBS costume dramas like “Wolf Hall.” But the wait is almost over for fans of several excellent TV series delayed by 2023 writers and actors strikes. ● All three of these shows will return this year, along with underrated series like Netflix comedy “Mo” or weird hits such as Apple’s “Severance.” Hollywood writers, actors and directors are always working on something new, including a Shonda Rhimes whodunit and a limited series about wellness influencers gone seriously awry. And it’s all coming to a TV near you soon. ● Here are the TV shows of 2025 we can’t wait to watch.

‘Severance’ Season 2

Apple TV+, Jan. 17

Are you ready to return to the office? Apple’s trippy science-fiction drama about a world in which work/life balance means literally splitting your consciousness is back this winter. The first season of the acclaimed series, from Dan Erickson and director Ben Stiller, introduced us to the strange world of Lumon Industries and “severed” employee Mark Scout (Adam Scott). The season ended with a heart-racing cliffhanger, and Season 2 promises some resolution and more mind-bending mysteries, fluorescent-lit office corridors and maybe even more “Music Dance Experiences.”

‘Mo’ Season 2

Netflix, Jan. 30

The first season of this superb, semi-autobiographical comedy starring and written by Palestinian-American comedian Mo Amer streamed all the way back in August 2022. But it was worth waiting for Season 2: New episodes focus on the title character’s struggle to get back across the border into the U.S. as a stateless refugee. Amer has a talent for bringing lightness to heavy topics such as asylum hearings and refugee status. The series humanizes and deepens our understanding of refugees, all

See TELEVISION, Page 2D

Adam Scott is Mark S. in “Severance.” PROVIDED BY APPLE TV+

STREAMING PREVIEW

‘Primeval’ revels in the wildest of the West

Kelly Lawler
Columnist
USA TODAY

Hell, apparently, is Utah in 1857.

At least that’s the way it looks in “American Primeval,” Netflix’s new Western, for which “brutal” isn’t a strong enough adjective. It’s savage and primal and bloody and cold and ruthless. It is all the worst parts of life – greed, tribalism, wanton violence, sexual depravity, deception, racism and ambition – mixed up in a soup of despair. The American melting pot this is not.

“Primeval” (now streaming, ★★½☆) is thus aptly named. Created by Peter Berg (“Friday Night Lights”) and written by Mark L. Smith, whose “The Revenant” is the best analog for the series, this is not the Wild West of spaghetti Westerns or even serious dramas such as HBO’s “Deadwood.” This version of the West is all gray skies, dirty snow and bearded men caked in mud and blood. It often is fascinating, sometimes riveting but more often gratuitous and dull, with a level of barbarity that might make even the worst “Game of Thrones” villains blush. It is not entertainment to escape into but a story you may want to escape from. If you can stomach the gore, there are good actors and a deep historical lesson about the origin of the soul of the country. But if “The Walking Dead” made you nauseous, please skip.

Dane DeHaan is Jacob in “American Primeval.” PROVIDED BY NETFLIX

“Primeval” focuses primarily on Sara Rowell (Betty Gilpin, “GLOW”), an East coast mother traveling west with her young son who becomes overwhelmed at the lawlessness and disorganization of the country once she gets past the end of the railroad tracks. She’s desperate to reach her husband, even though she lost her travel companions, and eventually finds Isaac (Taylor Kistch), who looks like Davy Crockett viewed through a prestige-TV darkness filter. A wild man with ties to a local Shoshone Nation tribe, he reluctantly joins Sara and her son, Devin (Preston Mota), on a journey west through Utah as a runaway Shoshone girl, Two Moons (Shawnee Pourier), tags along.

The unlikely quartet is caught up in the middle of a undeclared war between Indigenous nations, the U.S. government, pioneers heading west and the newly powerful Mormon church, its Nauvoo militia and leader Brigham Young (Kim Coates). Mormon brother and pioneer Jacob Pratt (Dane DeHaan) survives a grossly horrific clash between these elements and sets out on a semi-deranged mission to find his missing wife, Abish (Saura Lightfoot-Leon). Meanwhile, less savory characters, including Virgil Cutter (Jai Courtney), are after Sara and her son because of her past.

It’s a lot of plot threads for one story, and “Primeval” struggles to balance them, particularly when it comes to Cutter’s bounty-hunter storyline (if you can recognize Courtney in the beard and the mud, you should win a prize). The episodes are ponderous and feel overlong, almost a cliché

See PRIMEVAL, Page 2D

Television

Continued from Page 1D

while making us laugh at Amer's slightly feckless stumbling through his unique life.

'Saturday Night Live 50th Anniversary Special'

NBC, Feb. 16, 8 EST/PST

Live from New York, it's 50 years later. Although venerated sketch comedy institution "Saturday Night Live" officially celebrates its 50th birthday this fall (the first episode aired Oct. 11, 1975), NBC is going all out in February. Based on the hilarious and delightful 40th anniversary special 10 years ago – which gave us some particularly great sketches, including a "Celebrity Jeopardy!" revival and an earworm of a Digital Short – we expect great things from creator Lorne Michaels. And if that's not enough "SNL" celebration for you, NBC is airing a concert special on Feb. 14 and Peacock will stream two documentaries about the show and its music on Jan. 16 and 27, respectively.

'The White Lotus' Season 3

HBO, Feb. 16 (9 EST/PST)

Set in Thailand, the latest installment of this sharp satire has yet another superb cast checking into a "Lotus" resort, including Parker Posey, Carrie Coon, Walton Goggins and a returning actress from Season 1, Natasha Rothwell. Just as in the first two seasons, you can expect absurdly wealthy people, beautiful scenery, upstairs/downstairs drama and probably some murder. It's just the sort of post-Valentine's Day treat we all will need.

'Yellowjackets' Season 3

Showtime, Feb. 16 (streaming Feb. 14 on Paramount+ with Showtime)

It's been so long since we checked in on our hopelessly marooned teen girls and their middle-aged counterparts in this horror drama, which last aired in May 2023, that we might say we're hungry for more. Season 2 of the Emmy-nominated series struggled at various points but ended on a high note for viewers (and low note for the characters). Expectations are high for Season 3, which picks up in the past after the girls' shelter has burned down, and in the present after the death of adult Natalie (Juliette Lewis). There will certainly be plenty of plot developments to chew over.

'Daredevil: Born Again'

Disney+, March 4

Ten years after the gritty and violent Netflix "Daredevil" series premiered, the character is getting a second chance with this new Disney+ series, a revival with (presumably) a bit more of a family-friendly flair. Original stars Charlie Cox and Vincent D'Onofrio return as the hero and his arch-nemesis, respectively. The question remains, can it recapture the desolate and dark "Daredevil" style on Disney+?

'Your Friends & Neighbors'

Apple TV+, April 11

Jon Hamm is back in a business suit (and/or tuxedo) and it feels oh so good. The former "Mad Men" actor plays a hedge fund mogul who gets so very down on his luck he must resort to grand larceny. Amanda Peet and Olivia Munn also star in the unexpectedly fun series, that has a cynical, tongue-in-cheek tone and a slick aesthetic.

The teens of "Yellowjackets" return for Season 3. PROVIDED BY SHOWTIME

Palestinian-American comic Mo Amer. PROVIDED BY EDDY CHEN/NETFLIX

'Andor' Season 2

Disney+, April 22

The superlative "Star Wars" series will return for a second and final season following Diego Luna's Cassian Andor and his rise as a member of the rebellion in this prequel to "Star Wars: Rogue One." The first season of the show was so shockingly sophisticated, thoughtful and downright thrilling that expectations are high for the new episodes. But creator Tony Gilroy went into the project with a two-season plan, and I'm confident he will stick the landing as gracefully and triumphantly as one might blow up a Death Star.

'Apple Cider Vinegar'

Netflix, date TBA

The latest ripped-from-the-recent-headlines Netflix series about a single white female scammer ("Inventing Anna"), "Vinegar" tells the story of Belle Gibson, an Australian influencer who faked brain cancer for fame and fortune. The series, which stars Kaitlyn Dever, is slick and stylized, and illuminates the depravity of its scammer story as well as the horrors young women face in the health care system.

'Stranger Things' Season 5

Netflix, date TBA

There's one more trip to Hawkins, Indiana, left for us all. The fifth and final season of "Stranger Things" has wrapped production and is due sometime this year (maybe Halloween?) The last time we saw Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown), Mike (Finn Wolfhard), Hopper (David Harbour), Joyce (Winona Ryder) and the gang, things were looking pretty grim in the fight against the evil Vecna (Jamie Campbell Bower). But as dark as this series can get, we're banking on Eleven saving the day in the end, even if some of our friends don't make it out of the final battle alive.

Other major TV shows airing in 2025

- **"Squid Game" Season 3 (Netflix, date TBA):** Fans will finally learn what will become of Gi-hun (Lee Jung-jae) and the rest of the game players after that major Season 2 cliffhanger.
- **"Wednesday" Season 2 (Netflix, date TBA):** Get your goth gear ready, because Wednesday Addams (Jenna Ortega) returns to Nevermore Academy for more supernatural mysteries, and hopefully more dances.
- **"Wolf Hall: The Mirror and Light" (PBS, March 23)**: This riveting and gorgeous Masterpiece drama, set in Tudor England, returns with Damien Lewis, Mark Rylance and Jonathan Pryce.
- **"Ironheart" (Disney+, June 24)**: The new "Iron" man for Marvel is quite a bit different from Tony Stark: It's teen Riri Williams (Dominque Thorne), whom fans first saw in "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever."
- **"The Handmaid's Tale" Final Season (Hulu, date TBA):** Elisabeth Moss's June will fight for her life in Gilead one last time in Hulu's Emmy-winning dystopian drama.
- **"You" Final Season (Netflix, date TBA):** Stalker and killer Joe Goldberg (Penn Badgley) is back in New York and seemingly in a relationship built to last with rich Brit Kate (Charlotte Ritchie). What can go wrong?
- **"Poker Face" Season 2 (Peacock, date TBA):** Things weren't so good for lie-detecting accidental detective Charlie (Natasha Lyonne) at the end of Season 1 of the "Columbo"-inspired Peacock series. In Season 2 she's on the run again, joined by guest stars Cynthia Erivo, Katie Holmes and John Mulaney.
- **"The Residence" (Netflix, March 20):** "Knives Out" meets "Grey's Anatomy"? Acclaimed producer Shonda Rhimes is trying her hand at an Agatha Christie style murder mystery set in the White House, with Uzo Aduba as a Washington detective on the case.
- **"... And Just Like That" Season 3 (Max, date TBA):** After the wild and controversial Season 2, the "Sex and the City" sequel series returns with guest stars including Patti LuPone, Rosemarie DeWitt and Rosie O'Donnell.
- **"The Last of Us" Season 2 (HBO, April):** The exquisite adaptation of the video game delivered a stunning first season in early 2023 that revived the zombie apocalypse genre. Two years later, Pedro Pascal's Joel and Bella Ramsey's Ellie will return to keep it alive. Or at least, undead.

Primeval

Continued from Page 1D

these days when it comes to expensive-looking and serious streaming TV fare. Its woman-on-the-run story is weak at times, not quite engaging enough to get through the constant death and destruction.

And yes, depending on your tolerance level, the series' near-revelry in the macabre could be off-putting or even offensive. Rape, incest, dead children, scalping – there is no act of violence the show is shy of showing on camera. It has a point to make, certainly, that its story takes place among the most evil and feral of humans. But it could have made that point without venturing into so much gratuitous bloodshed.

But it is excellently cast; you might have the feeling Kitsch has been twiddling his thumbs his entire career waiting to play a stoic frontiersman. Gilpin, underrated in many projects, is a knockout, balancing most of the show on her character's twittering and anxious shoulders. And nobody does unhinged quite as well as DeHaan; the image of his nearly scalped face with blood and crazy eyes will stick with you long after you turn off the TV.

The Western can be a deeply romantic genre with white hats and black hats, dusty streets and beautiful sunsets. Great films and TV series have broken with our rose-colored expectations of the American frontier, "The Revenant" chief among them.

"Primeval" achieves its shocking goal and then some, but it doesn't quite have a story that's engrossing enough past its desire to make you clutch your pearls.

Shawnee Pourier, from left, is Two Moons, Taylor Kitsch is Isaac, Betty Gilpin is Sara and Preston Mota is Devin in "American Primeval." PROVIDED BY NETFLIX

31ST SAG AWARDS

'Wicked' flies high among nominees

Brian Truitt
USA TODAY

The Golden Globes fell hard for "Emilia Pérez." The thespians love her, too – and some musical witches.

A hit adaptation of the Broadway show, "Wicked' leads the movie field with five nominations at the 31st Screen Actors Guild Awards, hosted by Kristen Bell and streaming live Feb. 23 on Netflix (8 p.m. EST/5 PST).

"Wicked" and "Emilia," the acclaimed Spanish-language musical crime drama, are up for SAG's best ensemble award – the equivalent of the best picture Oscar – as are papal thriller "Conclave," Bob Dylan biopic "A Complete Unknown" and stripper dramedy "Anora."

The horror movie "The Substance" didn't make the best ensemble cut but star Demi Moore, who won her first Globe on Sunday, scored her first SAG nomination in her long career. She's up for lead actress with fellow first-timers Mikey Madison ("Anora"), Karla Sofía Gascón ("Emilia Pérez") and Pamela Anderson ("The Last Showgirl"), with Cynthia Erivo ("Wicked") also getting in.

Another Globe winner, Adrien Brody ("The Brutalist"), was nominated for lead actor alongside Daniel Craig ("Queer"), Colman Domingo ("Sing Sing"), Timothée Chalamet ("A Complete Unknown") and Ralph Fiennes ("Conclave").

Fresh off his Golden Globe win on Sunday, Kieran Culkin is nominated among his peers for a Screen Actors Guild Award for the dramedy "A Real Pain." PROVIDED BY SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Kieran Culkin ("A Real Pain") may be unstoppable in the supporting actor race this year, though he'll get SAG competition from Jonathan Bailey ("Wicked"), Yura Borisov ("Anora"), Jeremy Strong ("The Apprentice") and Edward Norton ("A Complete Unknown"). After winning the Globe for supporting actress, Zoe Saldaña ("Emilia Pérez") leads the field in the SAG category, where Monica Barbaro ("A Complete Unknown"), Ariana Grande ("Wicked"), Jamie Lee Curtis ("The Last Showgirl") and Danielle Deadwyler ("The Piano Lesson") also landed.

While post-World War II epic "The Brutalist" won the Globe for best drama, what's considered by many to be an Oscar front-runner was inauspiciously missing from the SAG best ensemble category and scored only one nomination, for Brody. "The Last Showgirl," which hasn't made much noise thus far this awards season, had an eye-opening turnout with its two nods for Anderson and Curtis, while Bailey is a surprise choice in the supporting actor field.

In the TV categories, FX epic "Shogun" leads with five nominations and is in contention for ensemble in a drama series with period piece "Bridgerton," spy thrillers "Slow Horses" and "The Day of the Jackal," and political soap "The Diplomat." "The Bear" scored four nods and is in the field for best comedy cast with "Abbott Elementary," "Hacks," "Only Murders in the Building" and "Shrinking."

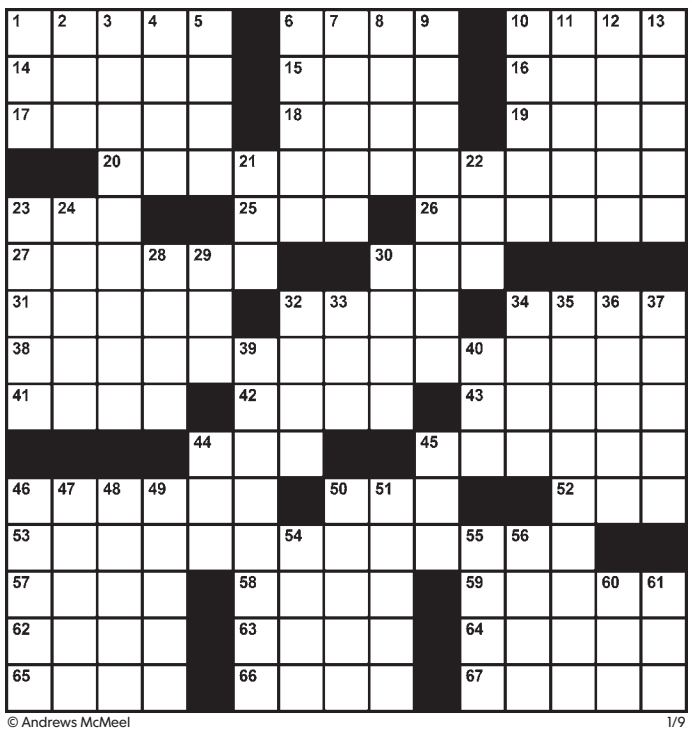
The SAG Awards is an important bellwether for the upcoming Academy Awards on March 2, given that actors compose the largest voting body in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. There also is usually a lot of carryover between acting categories: Last year, Oscars and SAG matched four out of five nominees in best actress, supporting actor and supporting actress, while the best actor contingent was the same.

The Screen Actors Guild originally planned to have Joey King and Cooper Koch announce the nominations Wednesday morning via a live YouTube event, which was canceled because of the Los Angeles wildfires.

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Jared Goudsmit
BY Maddy Ziegler

INCOGNITO TAB



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ACROSS
1 Breakfast roll similar to a bialy
6 "High Voltage" band
10 Group similar to a sorority, for short
14 Garlicky sauce
15 Blacken on a grill
16 Long, bounding gait
17 Smell of pie, e.g.
18 ___-pedi
19 Not just mine
20 "Ugh, never mind!"
23 Black Poetry Day mo.
25 Big jerk
26 Just slightly
27 Pay ___ (fair compensation topic)
30 Have some echicha
31 Horses' gaits
32 Twinge
34 ___ Spice (Victoria Beckham's nickname)
38 "Let's try this instead . . ."
41 Duplicate
42 Limbs worked in a handstand
43 "Water ___ the bridge!"
44 ___ButMakeItSports (social media account that compares photos of athletes with paintings)
45 "Forever" postal items
46 Finale
50 Hospital areas, for short
52 Shade of gray
53 Star and creator of "Abbott Elementary"
57 Large vases
58 Brunch, e.g.
59 ___-leaf tea
62 "Gotcha"
63 ". . . or ___!" (ultimatum words)
64 Sky blue
65 Mosquito or tick
66 Iditarod vehicle
67 Apt homophone of "medal"

DOWN
1 Sheep's sound
2 ___ conditioner
3 '90s animated series featuring a Disney dog
4 Muppet who sings "Anyone Can Be Friends"
5 Fibber
6 Tippy-tops
7 Conversation spaces on Twitch
8 "Noble Blood" host Schwartz
9 Card game with pegs
10 Main ingredient in most pastas
11 Way to go
12 ___ Fools' Day
13 Having a short fuse
21 Like many characters in "The L Word"
22 Nondairy milk option
23 Eye-related
24 Freight
28 Tiny
29 Org. that looks at luggage
30 Sinus docs
32 Cheeky
33 Convenience at a cash-only restaurant
34 ___ colada
35 Person who differs from the rest of the group
36 Trickles slowly
37 Scathing
39 Darts, pool, Giant Jenga, etc.
40 It's boring to be stuck in one
44 Uninvited visitor at a picnic
45 Tax ID
46 Supply with gear
47 Word before "practitioner" or "shark"
48 Has supper
49 Map within a map
50 Wipe away
51 Like some notebooks
54 "Class is over!" sound
55 Grand ___ (tennis feat)
56 Trickle slowly
60 Spanish for "Mrs."
61 Moray or conger

Wednesday's Answer

C	H	I	M	P			S	A	P		C	R	Y	P	T
L	O	C	A	L			L	I	U		R	A	T	I	O
E	L	A	T	E			A	M	P		A	C	U	T	E
F	A	N	T	A	S	Y	S	U	I	T	E				
		S	E	S	H				N	E	W	T			
P	I	E	R		O	C	E	A	N		A	H	S		
O	D	E		O	V	E	R	S		B	L	I	P	S	
L	I	T	T	L	E	D	I	D	W	E	K	N	O	W	
O	O	H	E	D		A	V	O	I	D		G	O	A	
	M	A	C		G	R	O	I	N		S	A	N	G	
		T	U	L	I	P			C	H	U	M			
		M	I	N	O	R	S	E	T	B	A	C	K		
F	L	A	S	K		I	O	U		T	A	B	O	O	
A	I	M	E	E		N	P	R		P	R	O	B	S	
T	E	C	H	S		T	E	E		S	U	B	S		

1/8

Answers: Call 1-900-988-8300, 99 cents a minute; or, with a credit card, 1-800-320-4280.

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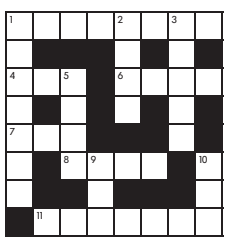

1/9

Across
1. 26676737
4. 247
6. 6787
7. 843
8. 3786
11. 5396683

Down
1. 2426837
2. 6263
3. 38833
5. 7333
9. 729
10. 283

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Today's theme
Music

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

1/8

Yesterday's solution

Numbers

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SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

				8	5			3
	1							4
		8	4	9			5	
				6	7	5		1
1	4			5			2	8
5		7	1	4				
	5			1	6	9		
6							1	
2			9	3				

1/9

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

© Andrews McMeel

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

4			3	1	
	1		4		
			2		
		3			
		1		2	
	4	2			5

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★☆

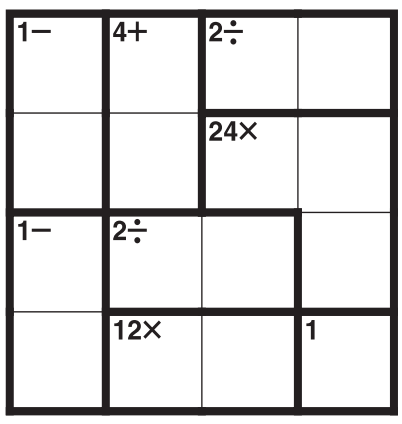
Wednesday's Answers

7	9	1	8	4	5	6	3	2
5	6	8	3	7	2	1	9	4
3	2	4	9	6	1	5	7	8
9	7	2	5	3	6	8	4	1
1	5	6	4	9	8	7	2	3
8	4	3	1	2	7	9	5	6
6	8	7	2	5	3	4	1	9
2	1	9	7	8	4	3	6	5
4	3	5	6	1	9	2	8	7

6	1	5	4	2	3
4	3	2	5	1	6
1	4	3	6	5	2
2	5	6	1	3	4
3	6	1	2	4	5
5	2	4	3	6	1

1/8

KENKEN



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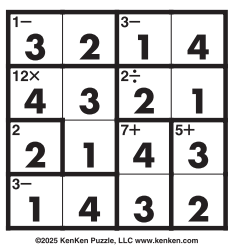
1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 (easy) or 1 though 6 (challenging) without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



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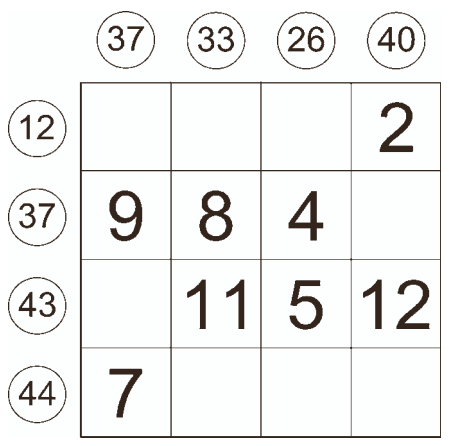
KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo Difficulty: **EASY**



Solution to Wednesday's puzzle

6	11	15	13
5	3	14	7
16	2	10	8
1	9	4	12

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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1/9/25

Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 1/9

Find and Circle:
Four words with EU in the middle ☑☐☐☐
Four five-letter musical instruments ☐☐☐☐
Three evergreen trees ☐☐☐
Three five-letter languages ☐☐☐
Student ☐

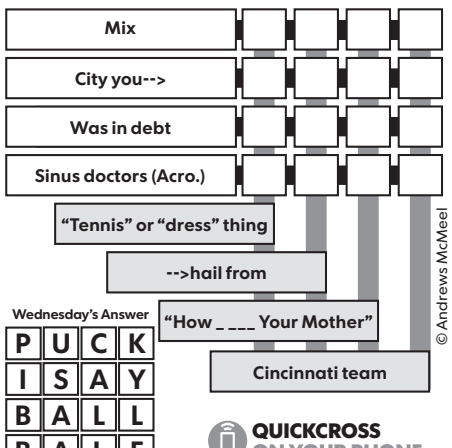
F	P	B	M	A	N	E	U	V	E	R	K			
N	E	U	A	P	C	P	I	A	N	O	E			
B	N	U	P	N	N	G	F	C	Q	N	E			
H	I	N	D	I	J	H	V	L	I	H	R			
C	T	C	E	L	L	O	Z	P	U	H	G			
P	A	S	T	E	U	R	I	Z	E	T	L			
P	L	V	B	S	L	E	U	T	H	Z	E			
C	E	D	A	R	R	S	P	R	U	C	E			

© Andrews McMeel

Wednesday's answer: WOOL LOON FOOT FOOD HOOK ZOOM BOOK GOOD SOON / LEAD GOLD IRON ZINC / INLET OCEAN / ARIZONA UTAH / APOLLO

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 1/9



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Wednesday's Answer

P	U	C	K
I	S	A	Y
B	A	L	L
B	A	L	E

1/8

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 1/9

1. **SOLID**
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____ **BLACK**

Clues:
1. Firm footing
2. First floor
3. Utmost effort
4. Certain hotel chain
5. Money-transfer company
6. UK flag's nickname
7. "School of Rock" star

Wednesday's Answer

PLAY	DEFENSE
DEFENSE	ATTORNEY
ATTORNEY	GENERAL
GENERAL	PUBLIC
PUBLIC	FIGURE
FIGURE	OUT
OUT	OF

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

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BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Agreements between sovereign nations
6 Grew older
10 Shoemaker's pointed tool
13 Edgar — Poe
14 Part
15 Tart
17 Shop
18 "Until we — again"
19 Actor — Lugosi
20 Stand unsteadily
22 Gets with difficulty (2 wds.)
24 War god
26 Connections
27 Wild hog
30 "— About You"
32 Most up-to-date
36 Sick
37 Eye part
39 Sorrow
40 Small monkey
42 Put a levy on
44 Storage tower
45 Sidestep
47 Charter
48 Dancer's specialty
49 Tranquil
51 — foo young
52 Dried out
53 Paints for artists
55 Apiece
57 Burning hot
61 Summer wear
65 In next — — time
66 Fossil fuel
68 Awake
69 Delivered a tune
70 Shirley MacLaine role
71 Variety show
72 Bauble
73 Abound
74 Kilmer poem

DOWN
1 Tense in grammar
2 Palo —
3 Stick together
4 Sauce for fish sticks
5 Show scorn
6 Give a weapon to
7 Leaves
8 Choose
9 Particular
10 Fire-retardant stuff
11 Troubles
12 Unusual thing
16 Strike
21 Send, as payment
23 Interpret
25 Singer — Vaughan
27 Mouthfuls
28 Martini fruit
29 Communion table
31 "Because of Winn- —"
33 Upscale
34 — plexus
35 Cliche
38 Worsted cloth
41 Belief system
43 French painter
46 Town in Oklahoma
50 Evoke
52 Fall of rain
54 Nighttime noise
56 Navigation map
57 Rds.
58 Layer
59 — Domini
60 "— of Thrones"
62 Talk wildly
63 Steadfast
64 Perceives
67 Take it on the —

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

S	C	A	M		K	A	R	M	A			E	S	P
P	O	L	O		E	M	A	I	L		S	A	N	E
O	N	A	N		G	U	N	S	L	I	N	G	E	R
T	E	N	T			S	G	T		V	A	L	E	T
			A	G	R	E	E		P	O	K	E	R	
	C	A	N	O	E	D		M	O	R	E			
S	O	N	A	T	A		O	I	L	Y		D	A	M
A	M	E	N		S	I	L	L	Y		C	U	B	A
P	A	W		F	O	L	D		G	U	I	D	E	D
			H	U	N	K		S	O	R	T	E	D	
	G	R	O	S	S		L	E	N	N	Y			
A	L	O	N	E		S	U	R			H	A	S	H
G	O	G	O	D	A	N	C	E	R		A	S	T	O
E	V	E	R		B	O	R	N	E		L	I	A	M
S	E	T			S	W	E	E	T		L	A	T	E

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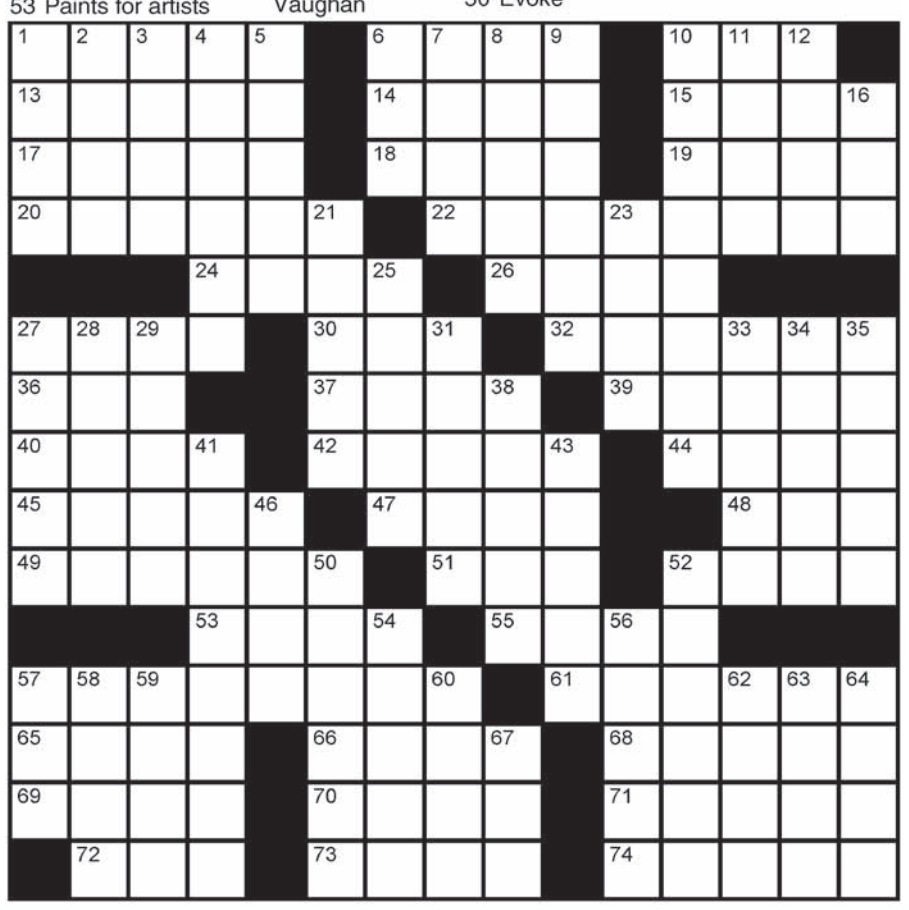

DON'T QUOTE ME®

Author James Baldwin talks about a benefit of reading.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
HEARTBREAK HISTORY READ THEN THINK WORLD

"YOU _____ YOUR PAIN AND YOUR _____ ARE UNPRECEDENTED IN THE _____ OF THE _____, BUT ___ YOU ___."

1/9

Wednesday's Answer: "People change and forget to tell each other" - Lillian Hellman

© WIGGLES 3D GAMES

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 scrapped (9)	
2 fear of missing out, briefly (4)	
3 new homesteaders (8)	
4 like a post-game athlete (6)	
5 3X baseball MVP Trout (4)	
6 when a new day begins (8)	
7 written word "supporters" (8)	

OKE	DIS	DED	KE	LE
WIN	DN	TT	BO	FO
HT	MO	MI	CAR	MI
SE	NDS	DED	RS	IG

Wednesday's Answers: 1. LINIMENT 2. ISLES 3. SENSITIVE 4. BARRIE 5. BRACELETS 6. GLEE 7. EVERGREENS 1/9

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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CNHOC

NUMOD

LZAABE

UEYABT

You're the new guy! I hope you like pastrami! We're splitting this.
Pete, this is Sam.
I'm glad I didn't eat breakfast.
WHEN THEY GOT TOGETHER MIDDAY AT THE DELI, IT WAS A ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

_____ - _____ - "_____"

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: ABOVE SUSHI FONDLY WAFFLE
Answer: The barista jokingly said they didn't have any coffee, but she was — FULL OF BEANS

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USA TODAY BEST-SELLING BOOKS BOOKLIST.USATODAY.COM

Rank this week ☐ Rank last week

		TITLE/AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	GENRE	C
1	1	**Dog Man: Big Jim Begins: A Graphic Novel (Dog Man #13): From the Creator of Captain Underpants**/Pilkey, Dav	Graphix	Humorous Stories	F
2	2	**James**/Everett, Percival	Doubleday Books	Literary	F
3	7	**Fourth Wing**/Yarros, Rebecca	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Fantasy - Action & Adventure	F
4	4	**The Let Them Theory: A Life-Changing Tool That Millions of People Can't Stop Talking About**/Robbins, Mel	Hay House LLC	Personal Success	NF
5	28	**Iron Flame**/Yarros, Rebecca	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Fantasy - Epic	F
6	53	**Martyr!**/Akbar, Kaveh	Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group	Literary	F
7	5	**Hot Mess (Diary of a Wimpy Kid Book 19): Volume 19**/Kinney, Jeff	Amulet Books	Humorous Stories	F
8	6	**Quicksilver**/Hart, Callie	Forever	Fantasy - Romantic	F
9	15	**Intermezzo**/Rooney, Sally	Farrar, Straus and Giroux	Literary	F
10	11	**Lights Out: An Into Darkness Novel**/Allen, Navessa	Zando - Slowburn	Romance - New Adult	F
11	21	**Haunting Adeline**/Carlton, H D	Zando	Romance - Contemporary	F
12	14	**The Women**/Hannah, Kristin	St. Martin's Press	Women	F
13	3	**Escaping Peril: A Graphic Novel (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #8)**/Sutherland, Tui T.	Graphix	Fantasy & Magic	F
14	22	**The Housemaid**/McFadden, Freida	Grand Central Publishing	Psychological	F
15	31	**The Frozen River: A GMA Book Club Pick**/Lawhon, Ariel	Vintage	Women	F
16	17	**The God of the Woods**/Moore, Liz	Riverhead Books	Literary	F
17	26	**Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones**/Clear, James	Avery Publishing Group	Organizational Behavior	NF
18	19	**Orbital: A Novel (Booker Prize Winner)**/Samantha Harvey	Grove Press	Literary	F
19	29	**Blood Over Bright Haven**/Wang, M. L.	Del Rey Books	Fantasy - Dark Fantasy	F
20	n/a	**Holmes, Marple & Poe: The Greatest Crime-Solving Team of the Twenty-First Century**/Patterson, James	Grand Central Publishing	Women	F
21	45	**Hunting Adeline**/Carlton, H D	Zando	Romance - Contemporary	F
22	24	**All Fours**/July, Miranda	Riverhead Books	Humorous - General	F
23	8	**The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World**/Kimmerer, Robin Wall	Scribner Book Company	Essays	NF
24	65	**All the Colors of the Dark**/Whitaker, Chris	Crown Publishing Group (NY)	Literary	F
25	23	**A Court of Thorns and Roses**/Maas, Sarah J.	Bloomsbury Publishing	Fantasy - Epic	F
26	n/a	**The Muscle Ladder: Get Jacked Using Science**/Nippard, Jeff	Victory Belt Publishing	Bodybuilding & Weight Training	NF
27	50	**Dandadan, Vol. 1**/Tatsu, Yukinobu	Viz Media	Manga - Supernatural	NF
28	13	**Small Things Like These**/Keegan, Claire	Grove Press	Literary	F
29	99	**The Coven: Special Edition**/Woods, Harper L.	Bramble	Romance - Fantasy	F
30	36	**The Nightingale**/Hannah, Kristin	St. Martin's Griffin	Literary	F
31	35	**The Wedding People**/Espach, Alison	Henry Holt & Company	Humorous - General	F
32	87	**In Too Deep: A Reacher Novel**/Child, Lee	Delacorte Press	Thrillers - Suspense	F
33	25	**Be Ready When the Luck Happens: A Memoir**/Garten, Ina	Crown Publishing Group (NY)	Personal Memoirs	NF
34	n/a	**Delicate Escape (Deluxe Edition) (Special)**/Cowles, Catherine	Sourcebooks Casablanca	Romance - Contemporary	F
35	57	**The Shadows Between Us**/Levenseller, Tricia	Feiwel & Friends	Romance - General	F
36	113	**A Court of Mist and Fury**/Maas, Sarah J.	Bloomsbury Publishing	Fantasy - Epic	F
37	131	**Bloodguard**/Robson, Cecy	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Fantasy - Romantic	F
38	20	**Wind and Truth: Book Five of the Stormlight Archive**/Sanderson, Brandon	Tor Books	Fantasy - Epic	F
39	38	**Phantasma**/Smith, Kaylie	Forever	Fantasy - Romantic	F
40	66	**One Dark Window**/Gillig, Rachel	Orbit	Fantasy - Epic	F
41	67	**Lightlark (the Lightlark Saga Book 1)**/Aster, Alex	Harry N. Abrams	Thrillers & Suspense	F
42	69	**Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow**/Zevin, Gabrielle	Vintage	Literary	F
43	n/a	**The Cursed: Special Edition**/Woods, Harper L.	Bramble	Romance - Fantasy	F
44	18	**Murdle: Volume 1: 100 Elementary to Impossible Mysteries to Solve Using Logic, Skill, and the Power of Deduction**/Karber, G. T.	St. Martin's Griffin	Logic & Brain Teasers	NF
45	59	**The Boyfriend**/McFadden, Freida	Poisoned Pen Press	Women	F
46	74	**If He Had Been With Me**/Nowlin, Laura	Sourcebooks Fire	Social Themes - Dating & Sex	F
47	n/a	**Money for Couples: No More Stress. No More Fights. Just a 10-Step Plan to Create Your Rich Life Together.**/Sethi, Ramit	Workman Publishing	Personal Finance - General	NF
48	43	**The Wren in the Holly Library (Deluxe Limited Edition)**/Linde, K. A.	Entangled: Red Tower Books	Fantasy - Romantic	F
49	62	**The Silent Patient**/Michaelides, Alex	Celadon Books	Psychological	F
50	119	**The Housemaid's Secret**/McFadden, Freida	Mobius	Psychological	F

WHAT AMERICA'S READING® The book list appears every Thursday. You also can find it at booklist.usatoday.com. Each week, USA TODAY collects sales data from booksellers representing a variety of outlets: bookstore chains, independent bookstores, mass merchandisers and online retailers. Using that data, we determine the 150 top-selling titles of the week.

MOVIES NATIONAL BOARD OF REVIEW AWARDS

'Wicked' rules the night, while Nicole Kidman offers a milk toast

Patrick Ryan
USA TODAY

NEW YORK – Nicole Kidman never gives just 2%.

At Tuesday's National Board of Review Awards, the "Babygirl" star wholly committed to the bit, re-creating a scene from the erotic drama in which her character chugs a glass of milk as part of sexual roleplay.

"Anyone who wants to join me, please – I'm going to raise a glass of milk to all the babygirls in the room," Kidman said after accepting best actress, earning laughs and emphatic cheers.

It was one of the high points of the glitzy dinner, as A-listers descended on Cipriani 42nd Street to sip cocktails and give a final push for awards hopefuls on the eve of Oscar nomination voting.

Reynolds helps honor 'Wicked' stars Cynthia Erivo, Ariana Grande

The big winner of this year's gala was "Wicked," which was honored with top prizes for best picture and director (Jon M. Chu). Lin-Manuel Miranda and Ryan Reynolds were on hand to fete the movie musical, which tells the story of how best friends Elphaba (Cynthia Erivo) and Glinda (Ariana Grande) became the witches of Oz.

The film "dares to center on two powerful women," said Reynolds, stepping out for the first time since wife Blake Lively filed a sexual harassment lawsuit last month against her "It Ends With Us" director/co-star Justin Baldoni. "Stories about women seem to be held to a different set of standards. They're often held to the standards women are held to in life: You must be perfect. You must hide your strength. You must shape-shift or placate."

He went on to shout-out each cast member. Grande held court with Kidman and "Sing Sing" actor Clarence Maclin, linking arms with boyfriend and co-star Ethan Slater.

Grande also took the stage with Erivo, where they poked fun at their tearful promo tour for "Wicked" as they accepted the NBR Spotlight Award.

"It's the singular 'I love you' text or the random 'I'm proud of you' voice note," Erivo said, as they reflected on their friendship and collaboration.

"It is being so good at acting that no one ever finds out how much we actually loathe each other," Grande deadpanned. "It's true," Erivo quipped. "We fooled you!"

Daniel Craig, Mikey Madison accept NBR awards

Daniel Craig, accepting best actor for the trippy gay romance "Queer," dedicated his trophy to co-star Drew Starkey: "If I was going to the jungle to take a bucket full of drugs, I would surely do it with you."

Kieran Culkin, who won supporting actor for "A Real Pain," went characteristically off script. Amid expletive-filled praise for collaborator Jesse Eisenberg, the "Succession" star recounted his odyssey tipping a bathroom attendant for chewing gum that evening.

Thanks to a combination of whiskey and coffee, "I've had the worst breath," Culkin confessed. "I became very self-aware of it as I was talking to Ariana and singing her praises for 'Wicked.' "

Supporting actress winner Elle Fanning ("A Complete Unknown") recalled being a Bob Dylan superfan and thanked her mom and boyfriend, Rolling Stone CEO Gus Wenner.

And "Anora" star Mikey Madison had the line of the night as she accepted a breakthrough performance from John Lithgow for her stripper dramedy: "I never thought John Lithgow would be calling me sexually athletic. Thank you for your incredibly kind and thoughtful words."

Top winners

Best film: "Wicked"
Director: Jon M. Chu ("Wicked")
Actor: Daniel Craig ("Queer")
Actress: Nicole Kidman ("Babygirl")
Supporting actor: Kieran Culkin ("A Real Pain")
Supporting actress: Elle Fanning ("A Complete Unknown")
Original screenplay: "Hard Truths"
Adapted screenplay: "Sing Sing"
Breakthrough performance: Mikey Madison ("Anora")

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NATION&WORLD EXTRA

INSIDE

Trump urged to continue resettling at-risk Afghans. **6NN**

People embrace as they evacuate in Altadena, Calif., on Wednesday. DAVID SWANSON/REUTERS

CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Flames surround Los Angeles

At least 5 dead, hundreds of homes destroyed and 100,000 evacuated

Jackie Luna, Joe Brock and Matt McKnight
REUTERS

LOS ANGELES – Raging wildfires surrounded Los Angeles on Wednesday, killing at least five people, destroying hundreds of homes and stretching firefighting resources and water supplies to the limit, as more than 100,000 people were ordered to evacuate.

Hurricane-force winds hindered firefighting operations and spread the fires, which have burned unimpeded since they began on Tuesday.

But instead of packing hurricane-like humidity, the dry wind fanned the flames over already parched terrain, and the two most dangerous fires continued to grow as the sun set on Wednesday, officials said.

A new fire broke out in the Hollywood Hills section of Los Angeles on Wednesday evening, Fire Chief Kristin Crowley told a news conference, forcing more evacuations and raising to six the number of wildfires burning in Los Angeles County.

All of them were 0% contained, according to state officials, including a pair of conflagrations that held the city in a pincer move.

On the west side, the Palisades Fire consumed 15,832 acres and 1,000 structures in the hills between Santa Monica and Malibu, racing down Topanga Canyon until reaching the Pacific Ocean on Tuesday. It was already one of the most destructive fires in Los Angeles history.

Smoke rises from the remains of burnt structures along the Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, Calif., on Wednesday. DANIEL COLE/REUTERS

"We're facing a historic natural disaster. And I think that can't be stated strong enough."
Kevin McGowan
Director of emergency management for Los Angeles County

A house burns in Altadena, Calif., on Wednesday. DAVID SWANSON/REUTERS

Aerial video by KTLA television showed block after block of smoldering homes in Pacific Palisades, the smoky grid occasionally punctuated by the orange blaze of another home still on fire.

See LOS ANGELES, Page 5NN

Denmark: Greenland unlikely to join US

But Arctic island may become independent, foreign minister says

Stine Jacobsen and Jacob Gronholt-Pedersen
REUTERS

COPENHAGEN, Denmark – Greenland may become independent if its residents want, but is unlikely to become a U.S. state, Denmark's foreign minister said on Wednesday after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump refused to rule out force to take control of the Arctic island.

Greenland's leader met with the Danish king in Copenhagen on Wednesday, a day after Trump's remarks thrust the fate of the mineral-rich and strategically important island, which is under Danish rule, to the top of world headlines.

Trump, who takes office on Jan. 20, said on Tuesday he would not rule out using military or economic action to make Greenland part of the United States. The same day, Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., made a private visit to Greenland.

Greenland, part of NATO through the membership of Denmark, has strategic significance for the U.S. military and for its ballistic missile early-warning system since the shortest route from Europe to North America runs via the Arctic island.

The president-elect has indicated he would pursue a more combative foreign policy that disregards traditional diplomatic formalities.

Greenland, the world's biggest island, has been part of Denmark for 600 years although its 57,000 people now govern their own domestic affairs. The island's government led by Prime Minister Mute Egede aims for eventual independence.

Rasmussen

"We fully recognize that Greenland has its own ambitions. If they materialize, Greenland will become independent, though hardly with an ambition to become a federal state in the United States," said Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen.

He told reporters the United States' heightened security concerns in the Arctic were legitimate following increased Russian and Chinese activity in the region.

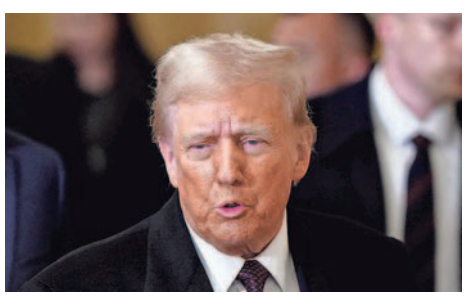
"I don't think that we're in a foreign policy crisis," he said. "We are open to a dialogue with the Americans on how we can possibly cooperate even more closely than we do to ensure that the American ambitions are fulfilled."

Still, although Denmark itself played down the seriousness of Trump's threat to its territory, the returning president's openly stated ambition to expand U.S. borders has jolted European allies less than two weeks before he takes office.

France's foreign minister, Jean-Noel Barrot, said Europe would not let

See GREENLAND, Page 8NN

Trump aims to unite Republicans behind his agenda



President-elect Donald Trump speaks at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Wednesday. ELIZABETH FRANTZ/REUTERS

President-elect pays visit to lawmakers at Capitol

David Morgan
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President-elect Donald Trump arrived at the U.S. Senate on Wednesday aiming to unite Republicans behind a strategy for implementing tax cuts, border controls and increased fossil fuel production, 12 days before he returns to the White House.

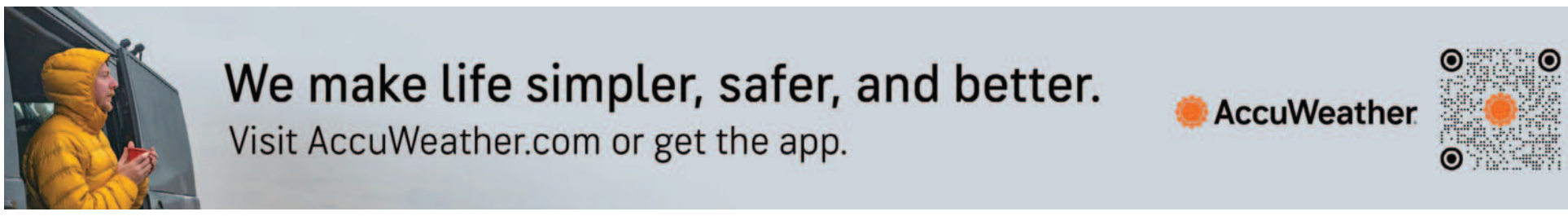
Trump entered the U.S. Capitol for the first time since his supporters stormed the building on Jan. 6, 2021, over his claims of a stolen 2020 election.

He paid his respects on a visit to the casket of former President Jimmy Carter in the Capitol Rotunda before Trump was due to meet Republicans who hold a 53-47 majority in the Senate. Trump will attend Carter's funeral on Thursday in Washington.

With slim majorities in the Senate and House of Representatives, Republicans have yet to agree on whether to pursue one bill containing his priorities or two and hold divergent views about what the legislation should contain.

Some Senate Republicans had argued they should break Trump's agenda into two bills, allowing them to notch a quick success on border and energy policy before turning to the thornier matter of taxes. Some House Republicans warn

See AGENDA, Page 6NN

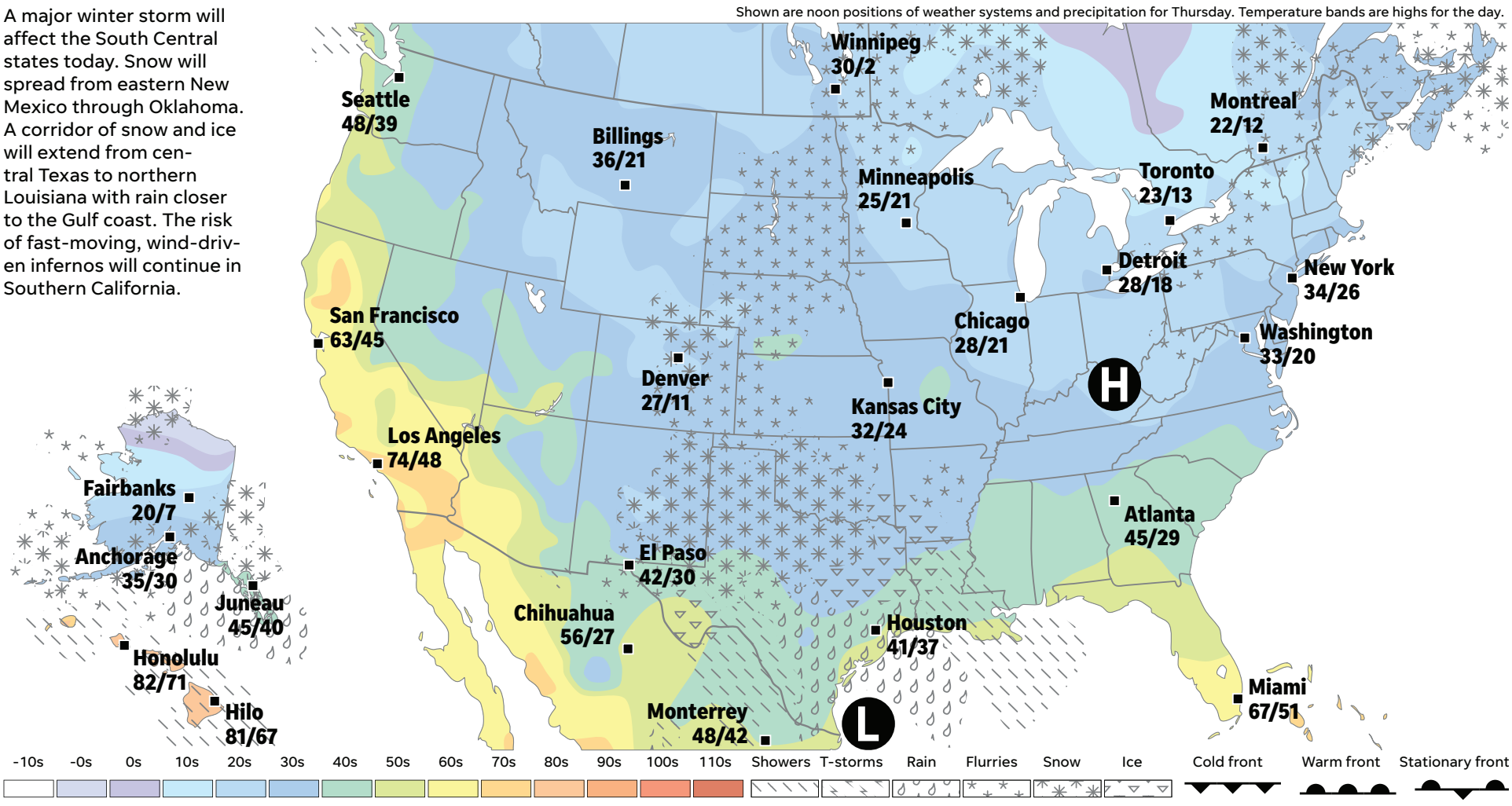


NATIONAL SUMMARY

A major winter storm will affect the South Central states today. Snow will spread from eastern New Mexico through Oklahoma. A corridor of snow and ice will extend from central Texas to northern Louisiana with rain closer to the Gulf coast. The risk of fast-moving, wind-driven infernos will continue in Southern California.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation for Thursday. Temperature bands are highs for the day.



WEDNESDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)

High:	**80** at Oceanside, CA
Low:	**-25** at Antero Reservoir, CO
Precip:	**0.13”** at Holland, MI

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)

High:	**112** at Urandangi, Australia
Low:	**-50** at Delyankir, Russia
Precip:	**4.57”** at Apia, Samoa

TODAY IN HISTORY

A deadly tornado ripped through Reading, Pa., on Jan. 9, 1889, killing dozens and injuring hundreds of people. It was the first of two twisters to hit Reading in 1889.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: How intense can snowfall be?

A: In the strongest storms, accumulations may reach 7 or 8 inches an hour.

NATIONAL CITIES THURSDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

	High/low/W	Air Quality
● Aberdeen, SD	34/18/sn	27
● Abilene, TX	34/30/sn	37
● Accomac, VA	32/22/pc	35
Adrian, MI	30/18/pc	56
Akron, OH	23/11/pc	51
Alamogordo, NM	37/18/sf	31
● Alexandria, VA	32/19/s	55
Alliance, OH	25/9/c	51
● Amarillo, TX	31/20/sn	30
Ames, IA	31/22/pc	29
Anderson, SC	45/23/s	52
Appleton, WI	28/21/c	50
Asheville, NC	35/20/s	52
Ashland, OH	23/11/s	53
Athens, GA	46/26/s	53
Augusta, GA	47/22/s	54
● Austin, TX	38/36/r	34
● Bartlesville, OK	35/28/sn	36
Battle Creek, MI	29/18/pc	47
Bedford, IN	26/15/s	70
● Binghamton, NY	19/14/sf	35
Bluffton, SC	48/32/s	50
Bremerton, WA	47/37/c	46
● Brockton, MA	29/24/c	34
● Brownwood, TX	35/30/sn	36
Burlington, IA	29/24/pc	38
Burlington, NC	37/17/s	47
● Burlington, VT	22/18/sn	27
Cambridge, OH	28/6/s	50
● Camdenton, MO	40/29/pc	47
● Canandaigua, NY	23/15/sf	41
Canton, OH	24/10/pc	52
● Carlsbad, NM	37/27/sn	33
● Chambersburg, PA	30/15/pc	51
● Cherry Hill, NJ	34/22/pc	52
Cincinnati, OH	24/9/s	58
Clarksville, TN	36/27/s	63
Coldwater, MI	29/18/pc	53
Columbus, OH	25/9/pc	67
● Corning, NY	25/12/sf	41
● Corpus Christi, TX	47/40/r	34
Daytona Beach, FL	52/40/s	33
● Deming, NM	37/25/sf	59
● DeRidder, LA	40/35/r	25
Des Moines, IA	32/24/pc	36
Detroit, MI	28/18/s	54
● Devils Lake, ND	31/7/sn	22
● Dover, NH	25/20/c	39
El Paso, TX	42/30/sf	39
Elmira, NY	25/11/sf	40
Erie, PA	25/17/sf	50
Eugene, OR	46/36/pc	49
Evansville, IN	29/18/s	66
● Fall River, MA	31/24/pc	41
Farmington, NM	41/15/pc	34
Fayetteville, NC	41/22/s	38
Fond du Lac, WI	29/21/c	51
Fort Myers, FL	64/44/s	33
● Fort Smith, AR	31/28/sn	43
● Framingham, MA	29/24/c	33
Freeport, IL	28/21/s	49
Fremont, OH	29/16/s	57
Fort Collins, CO	32/6/sn	53
Gadsden, AL	42/27/s	51
Gainesville, FL	51/29/s	42
Galesburg, IL	29/22/pc	39
Gastonia, NC	43/21/s	54
● Glen Rose, TX	34/31/sn	41
● Gonzales, LA	46/43/r	34
Great Falls, MT	33/26/s	40
Green Bay, WI	28/21/pc	46
Greenville, SC	43/22/s	54
● Hackensack, NJ	32/24/pc	47
Hagerstown, MD	30/15/pc	51
Hattiesburg, MS	48/36/pc	40
Henderson, KY	31/18/s	68
Hendersonville, NC	37/22/s	57
● Herkimer, NY	22/12/sn	40
Hillsdale, MI	28/16/pc	54
● Holland, MI	29/23/pc	50
● Hornell, NY	23/12/sf	43
● Houma, LA	49/46/r	33
Howell, MI	28/17/pc	51
● Hutchinson, KS	32/22/c	37
● Hyannis, MA	28/23/pc	26
Indianapolis, IN	23/13/s	66
Iowa City, IA	30/22/pc	41
● Ithaca, NY	20/14/sf	34
● Jackson, MS	45/36/pc	46
Jackson, TN	39/30/s	62
Jacksonville, FL	50/29/s	43
Jacksonville, NC	39/21/s	31
Kent, OH	25/10/c	52
Kewanee, IL	29/22/pc	49
● Keyser, WV	26/13/pc	51
Kinston, NC	39/20/s	37
Knoxville, TN	35/23/s	51
Lafayette, IN	23/15/s	60
● Lafayette, LA	45/41/r	31
● Lakeland, FL	57/38/s	44
Lansing, MI	28/18/c	51
Las Cruces, NM	35/24/sf	40
● Lebanon, PA	32/20/pc	45
Leesburg, FL	55/38/s	34
● Levittown, PA	35/22/pc	45
Lincoln, IL	26/20/pc	43
Louisville, KY	30/17/s	67
● Lubbock, TX	35/23/sn	33
Manitowoc, WI	29/22/pc	51
Mansfield, OH	22/11/s	53
Marshall, NC	31/13/s	51
Marshfield, WI	25/18/c	46
Massillon, OH	24/9/pc	52
● McLean, VA	31/18/s	52
Melbourne, FL	57/42/s	37
Memphis, TN	39/31/pc	64
● Middletown, NY	26/19/pc	33
● Milford, MA	28/22/c	35
Milwaukee, WI	31/24/c	53
Monroe, MI	29/19/s	53
● Monroe, LA	42/35/r	42
Montgomery, AL	47/33/s	51
Muncie, IN	22/13/s	68
Murfreesboro, TN	37/23/s	55
Naples, FL	65/45/s	32
Nashville, TN	37/27/s	59
● Neptune, NJ	34/23/pc	37
● New Bedford, MA	32/25/pc	31
New Bern, NC	40/21/s	32
New Philadelphia, OH	26/10/s	51
Newark, OH	26/4/pc	59
● Newton, NJ	29/19/pc	37
● New York, NY	34/26/pc	52
● Norwich, CT	29/20/pc	32
Ocala, FL	54/30/s	40
● Oklahoma City, OK	31/28/sn	43
● Opelousas, LA	41/36/i	31
Oshkosh, WI	27/20/c	47
Palm Beach, FL	63/53/s	37
Palm Springs, CA	75/50/s	82
Panama City, FL	53/40/s	33
Pekin, IL	28/23/pc	49
Pensacola, FL	50/42/pc	50
Peoria, IL	28/22/pc	46
Petersburg, VA	37/16/s	50
Phoenix, AZ	66/45/s	101
Port Huron, MI	26/14/s	47
● Portsmouth, NH	26/21/sn	31
● Poughkeepsie, NY	31/20/pc	29
● Providence, RI	30/24/pc	34
Pueblo, CO	33/7/sf	39
● Quincy, MA	29/25/c	44
Redding, CA	72/41/s	53
Reno, NV	48/24/s	60
Ravenna, OH	25/10/c	52
Richmond, IN	22/5/s	69
● Rochester, NY	25/16/sf	41
Rockford, IL	28/22/s	45
● Ruidoso, NM	29/7/sf	26
Salem, OR	50/37/s	51
● Salina, KS	31/21/pc	35
Salinas, CA	69/42/s	58
● Salisbury, MD	31/19/s	36
● San Angelo, TX	36/31/sn	31
Sarasota, FL	59/42/s	37
Savannah, GA	49/27/s	53
Sheboygan, WI	30/22/pc	51
Shelby, NC	41/21/s	54
● Sherman, TX	32/28/sn	44
● Shreveport, LA	38/33/i	27
Silver City, NM	39/16/c	59
● Sioux Falls, SD	32/20/sf	26
● Somerset, PA	19/8/sf	52
● Somerville, NJ	33/21/pc	38
South Bend, IN	27/19/s	52
Spartanburg, SC	42/24/s	54
Springfield, IL	26/21/pc	42
● Springfield, MO	37/27/pc	39
St. Augustine, FL	48/37/s	35
● St. Cloud, MN	24/19/c	32
St. George, UT	52/25/s	45
Staunton, VA	30/1/s	50
Stevens Point, WI	26/19/c	49
Stockton, CA	63/38/s	68
● Stroudsburg, PA	28/17/pc	38
Stuart, FL	61/48/s	41
Sturgis, MI	29/18/pc	55
Tallahassee, FL	53/31/s	38
● Thibodaux, LA	48/44/r	40
● Topeka, KS	34/24/pc	46
Tuscaloosa, AL	44/33/pc	54
● Utica, NY	22/9/sn	33
Ventura, CA	66/54/pc	83
Victorville, CA	61/26/s	70
● Vineland, NJ	33/19/s	40
Visalia, CA	61/35/s	84
● Washington, DC	33/20/s	52
● Watertown, SD	30/17/sf	35
Wausau, WI	25/17/c	43
● Waynesboro, PA	30/14/pc	50
● White Plains, NY	32/24/pc	32
● Wichita Falls, TX	34/30/sn	38
● Wilmington, DE	34/21/pc	52
Wilmington, NC	42/21/s	35
Wisconsin Rapids, WI	26/18/c	49
Wooster, OH	24/11/pc	50
● Worcester, MA	25/21/pc	41
● York, PA	32/18/pc	45

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Thursday High/low/W	Friday High/low/W
Acapulco	86/70/pc	87/71/pc
Addis Ababa	75/51/pc	75/52/pc
Algiers	71/46/s	70/46/s
Amman	59/39/pc	60/45/pc
● Amsterdam	41/36/sh	42/30/pc
Ankara	54/25/pc	51/27/pc
Asuncion	100/69/s	101/71/s
Athens	64/48/pc	65/48/s
Auckland	75/60/s	75/58/s
Baghdad	70/37/pc	70/44/s
Bangkok	92/73/s	89/69/s
Beijing	38/13/s	39/14/pc
Beirut	68/54/pc	69/55/pc
Belgrade	62/39/pc	47/30/c
● Berlin	38/32/c	35/29/sf
● Bogota	67/51/r	69/46/c
● Brussels	38/27/sn	35/24/pc
Bucharest	59/38/s	56/32/pc
● Budapest	53/37/c	42/27/pc
Buenos Aires	85/72/s	84/71/pc
Cairo	72/56/pc	69/57/s
Cape Town	77/63/pc	77/60/pc
Caracas	87/74/pc	90/74/pc
Casablanca	72/42/s	72/49/s
Colombo	86/77/sh	89/77/r
Copenhagen	40/32/pc	35/29/c
Damascus	60/32/pc	60/38/c
Dublin	36/24/pc	41/38/c
Geneva	50/34/r	40/37/sh
Guatemala City	74/56/pc	80/58/s
Hanoi	72/57/c	66/56/c
● Harare	74/63/t	75/64/t
Havana	70/49/pc	79/61/s
● Helsinki	37/33/sn	35/26/sn
Hong Kong	70/53/c	63/52/pc
Jakarta	84/76/r	88/76/t
Jerusalem	60/45/pc	60/45/pc
● Johannesburg	73/61/t	74/61/t
Kabul	40/27/s	41/29/pc
Khartoum	89/63/s	86/61/s
Kyiv	41/37/c	44/30/sh
Kingston	87/73/s	87/73/pc
● La Paz	54/41/r	54/41/r
Lagos	91/77/s	91/72/s
Lima	77/66/c	77/67/pc
Lisbon	63/55/pc	63/58/c
London	38/26/s	36/28/c
Madrid	59/44/pc	56/46/c
Manila	87/75/c	85/75/r
Mexico City	70/50/pc	70/53/c
Milan	49/39/pc	50/34/pc
Mombasa	92/77/sh	91/76/t
Montevideo	82/62/s	79/63/pc
● Montreal	22/12/sn	21/14/pc
● Moscow	34/31/c	38/36/sn
Nairobi	82/62/t	79/61/t
New Delhi	68/45/pc	64/48/pc
Panama City	90/73/pc	90/72/sh
Paris	51/35/sh	39/31/sh
Port-au-Prince	89/65/pc	89/61/pc
Rio de Janeiro	78/72/t	80/72/pc
Riyadh	63/46/pc	68/52/s
Rome	63/52/pc	63/47/s
● San Jose	80/64/sh	82/65/c
San Salvador	87/62/pc	85/61/s
Santiago	91/59/s	92/59/s
Sao Paulo	75/64/r	75/62/t
● Sarajevo	54/42/c	46/26/r
Shanghai	43/28/pc	43/27/s
Singapore	89/76/c	81/75/t
● Stockholm	28/23/c	29/25/c
● Sydney	77/69/sh	74/69/t
● Taipei	61/51/c	55/51/c
Tegucigalpa	79/58/c	84/57/pc
Tehran	55/39/s	56/39/pc
● Tokyo	56/35/s	50/35/s
Toronto	23/13/pc	30/24/c
Tunis	69/54/pc	67/53/s
Vancouver	45/39/pc	45/39/sh
● Vienna	48/34/pc	41/30/s
Warsaw	44/34/r	37/30/c
Yerevan	39/22/pc	40/22/pc
Zagreb	57/35/pc	40/27/r
● Zurich	51/30/r	37/29/sn

● Denotes possible travel delays Thursday

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

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WEST AFRICA

Tone deaf

African leaders and activists strongly criticized French President Emmanuel Macron this week after he claimed that a number of countries in West Africa and the Sahel region owed their sovereignty to France's military interventions, sparking accusations of neo-colonialism and dismissive rhetoric, Bloomberg reported.

During a speech to French ambassadors in Paris on Monday, Macron defended France's presence in the Sahel and criticized what he called "ingratitude" from African governments.

Macron cited France's military operations, beginning with its 2013 deployment in Mali to combat Islamist insurgents, claiming that "none of them would be a sovereign country today if the French army hadn't deployed in the region."

He accused African leaders of failing to acknowledge France's role: "I think someone forgot to say thank you," he remarked.

Macron also rejected claims that French troops had been expelled from the Sahel, attributing their withdrawal to coups in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, where anti-French sentiment has surged, CNN added.

His remarks received strong backlash from a number of African leaders, with Chadian leaders saying that Macron was "in the wrong era" and accused France of prioritizing its own strategic interests over long-term development in Chad. Activists, including Togolese writer Farida Bemba Nabourema, condemned the comments as paternalistic and emblematic of neo-colonial attitudes.

Senegalese Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko emphasized that Senegal's decision to remove foreign military bases, including France's, was unilateral and underscored the nation's sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Ivory Coast's President Alassane Ouattara said the country's decision reflects the modernization of its armed forces and is part of a broader trend in the region.

BOLIVIA

Sink or swim

A community of ethnic Aymara shamans in Bolivia called amautas, or "wise ones" in the indigenous Quechua language, are refusing to abandon their cliffside homes.

Called "suicide shacks," these huts in the Andean city of El Alto sit a few feet from the edge of a steep cliff. Heavy rains and other weather threaten to erode the few feet between them and oblivion. Officials are now determining whether they should force the shamans out to save their lives, the BBC reported.

The issue could be a metaphor for the precarious situation in the South American country, as Bolivians debate who should lead them out of their current crises.

Former Bolivian President Evo Morales is seeking to return to office by running in the August 2025 presidential election on the campaign pledge of making the country great again. Morales held office for 14 years. He pursued a leftist agenda that redistributed the country's vast mineral and other resources, spreading prosperity – at least temporarily.

But Morales resigned from office in 2019 after protests over a disputed election and his attempts to circumvent term limits. Morales then went into exile in Mexico. He has since returned to the country and now faces charges of statutory rape that he says are politically motivated. Bolivia's top court has ruled that he can't run for office again, Al Jazeera reported, but he appears to be preparing to try.

Meanwhile, Morales' former protege, President Luis Arce, who is running for reelection, is struggling to improve the country's dismal economy, Reuters explained. Inflation is at a 10-year high, natural gas exports are decreasing as old fields have dried up and new ones remain unexplored, the central bank is bereft of foreign reserves, and fuel imports are up.

The fuel crisis is becoming especially destabilizing, Voice of America noted. Protests have been breaking out between Morales and Arce supporters who both claim their man should lead the country, the New York Times added.

"Shortages and price increases; falling purchasing power and rising poverty; deterioration of the social mood," Gabriel Espinoza, a former director at Bolivia's central bank, told the Economist. "The question is when and how this will morph into conflict in the streets."

DISCOVERIES

A taste for flesh

Here's a new idea for a horror movie: flesh-eating squirrels.

California ground squirrels, long considered harmless nut-hoarders, have shocked scientists who have recently discovered the arboreal rodents' carnivorous tendencies.

A research team recently documented these rodents hunting, killing and feasting on voles, a behavior previously unseen in this species.

"This was shocking," lead author Jennifer Smith of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire said in a statement. "Squirrels are one of the most familiar animals to people."

Smith and her colleagues conducted their study at Briones Regional Park in California during the summer of 2024. They recorded 74 squirrel-vole interactions, writing that 42% of them involved active hunting. Observations peaked in early July, coinciding with a population explosion of voles, suggesting that the squirrels seized the opportunity for a protein-packed feast.

"From then, we saw that behavior almost every day," noted co-author Sonja Wild. "Once we started looking, we saw it everywhere."

The squirrels employed surprising hunting tactics, such as chasing, pouncing and killing by biting the voles' necks. And they weren't picky when it came to what they ate. The squirrels consumed their prey's flesh, organs and cartilage, the Washington Post noted.

Such dietary flexibility, experts believe, could help the squirrels adapt to rapidly changing environments.

"The fact that California ground squirrels are behaviorally flexible and can respond to changes in food availability might help them persist in environments rapidly changing due to the presence of humans," Wild explained.

The findings raise questions about whether hunting behavior is learned or instinctual and its potential ecological impacts.

Aoun may be next Lebanon leader

Parliamentary vote taking place amid historic regional shift

Laila Bassam and Tom Perry
REUTERS

Lebanese security forces stand guard near the Parliament in Beirut on Wednesday, a day before a parliamentary session to elect a president. ANWAR AMRO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

BEIRUT – Lebanon's parliament looks set to elect army chief Joseph Aoun head of state on Thursday, three senior political sources said, ending a presidential vacuum which has persisted since 2022 and showing the diminished sway of the Iran-backed Hezbollah.

The election marks the first test of Lebanon's power balance since Shi'ite Muslim Hezbollah emerged badly pummeled from last year's war with Israel, and since its Syrian ally Bashar al-Assad was toppled from power in December.

The post, reserved for a Maronite Christian in the country's sectarian power-sharing system, has been vacant since Michel Aoun's term ended in October 2022. None of the groups in the 128-seat parliament has enough seats to impose their choice, and they have so far been unable to agree on a consensus candidate.

Momentum built behind Joseph Aoun's candidacy on Wednesday, as Hezbollah's preferred candidate – Suleiman Frangieh – withdrew his candidacy and declared his support for the military commander, along with a growing number of other lawmakers.

While Hezbollah and its Shi'ite ally the Amal Movement led by Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri had long expressed reservations about Aoun's candidacy as they stuck by Frangieh, the three sources said enough Shi'ite lawmakers would elect him in order to secure the 86 votes he needs to win.

One of the Lebanese politicians said Western and Arab contacts with Lebanese factions had intensified on Wednesday with the aim of securing the election of Aoun, who Lebanese political sources say enjoys U.S. approval.

French and Saudi envoys met Lebanese politicians in Beirut on Wednesday. Four Lebanese political sources who met the Saudi envoy, Prince Yazid bin Farhan, last week said he spelled out preferred qualifications which signal Saudi support for Aoun.

Saudi Arabia was once a big player in Lebanon, vying with Tehran for influence, before seeing its role eclipsed by Iran and the heavily armed Hezbollah, which is listed as a terrorist group by Washington and its Gulf Arab allies.

Aoun, 60, has been commander of the U.S.-backed Lebanese army since 2017. On his watch, U.S. aid continued to flow to the army, part of a long-standing U.S. policy focused on supporting state institutions to curb Hezbollah's influence.

A candidate requires 86 votes to win in a first-round vote, or 65 in a second round. But Berri has said that Aoun, as a still-serving state employee, would still need 86 votes because his election requires a constitutional amendment.

George Adwan, a member of the Lebanese Forces party, a Christian faction which staunchly opposes Hezbollah and decided to vote for Aoun, said his election would "open the door to a new phase."

Aoun has a key role in shoring up the ceasefire brokered by Washington and Paris in November.

The terms require the Lebanese military to deploy into south Lebanon as Israeli troops and Hezbollah withdraw forces.

Still reeling from a financial collapse in 2019, Lebanon desperately needs foreign aid to rebuild from the war.

Much of the damage is in Shi'ite majority areas.

Hezbollah, its supply line to Iran severed by Assad's ousting, has urged Arab and international support for Lebanon.

The vote takes place against a backdrop of historic change in the wider Middle East, where the Assad-led Syrian state exercised sway over Lebanon for decades, both directly and through allies such as Hezbollah.

Hezbollah's support was vital to propelling Michel Aoun to the presidency in 2016, as the group and factions which supported its possession of a powerful arsenal were in the ascendant.

A State Department spokesperson said it was "up to Lebanon to choose its next president, not the United States or any external actor."

"We have been consistent in our efforts to press Lebanon to elect a new president, which we see as important to strengthening Lebanon's political institutions," the spokesperson said.

Saudi Minister Faisal bin Farhan said last October that Riyadh had never fully disengaged from Lebanon and that outside countries should not tell Lebanese what to do.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot expressed hope in comments to France Inter radio, saying the election was "a prerequisite for the continuation of this dynamic of peace" and also for Lebanon's economic and social recovery.

Other candidates in focus include Jihad Azour, a senior International Monetary Fund official who formerly served as finance minister, and Maj.-Gen. Elias al-Baysari, head of General Security, a state security agency.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Wall Street indexes end little changed

Johann M Cherian, Sukriti Gupta and Carolina Mandl
REUTERS

U.S. stocks ended little changed on Wednesday in a session that struggled for a clear direction, as investors digested the impact of two conflicting sets of jobs data and a report that said President-elect Donald Trump was mulling a national economic emergency declaration on inflation.

"Inflation is the wild card in 2025. There are lots of things that potentially have the risk to shift inflation back upward," said Charlie Ripley, senior investment strategist for Allianz Investment Management.

The minutes of the Federal Reserve's Dec. 17-18 meeting showed on Wednesday that officials saw a rising risk that price pressures may remain sticky as policymakers began wrestling with the impact of policies expected from the incoming Trump administration.

Market sentiment was fragile after a CNN report said Trump was mulling building the new tariff program by using the International Economic Emergency Powers Act, which authorizes a president to manage imports during a national emergency.

Benchmark 10-year yields peaked at 4.73%, the highest since April 25, to retreat slightly to 4.677% later in the afternoon.

Ahead of Trump's taking office later in the month, concerns about potential surcharges on U.S. trade partners have kept investors on edge as Trump's policies, including mass deportations and tariffs, could stoke inflation pressures.

"If wider tariffs are implemented, it could have a short-term impact on inflation," said Thomas Hayes, chairman at Great Hill Capital LLC. "The Fed will sit back and see if he (Trump) does enact punitive tariffs and if he does, how much of that potential inflationary impact will be offset by the cuts in government spending."

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 106.84 points, or 0.25%, to 42,635.20; the S&P 500 gained 9.20 points, or 0.16%, to 5,918.23; and the Nasdaq Composite lost 10.80 points, or 0.06%, to 19,478.88.

Eight of the 11 S&P 500 sectors posted gains, led by the health care index, up 0.53%.

Megacaps were mixed, with Microsoft up 0.52%, while Alphabet and Meta fell 0.79% and 1.16%, respectively.

Investors also assessed an ADP National Employment Report that showed private payrolls growth slowed sharply in December, although a separate Labor Department report said jobless claims for the previous week fell.

On Friday, the government publishes its closely watched employment report for December.

The Fed has stayed put on interest rates, and traders now expect the first trim this year in either May or June, according to the CME Group's FedWatch Tool.

Fed board member Christopher Waller said inflation should continue falling in 2025 and allow the central bank to further reduce interest rates, though at an uncertain pace.

EBay rose 9.86% after Meta Platforms said it will launch a test showing the e-commerce firm's listings on Facebook Marketplace.

Edison International dropped 10.18%. Its Californian subsidiary cut power to customers to prevent damage to distribution lines from a wildfire.

Quantum-computing stocks Rigetti Computing and IonQ plunged over 40%, while Quantum Computing was down 39% after Nvidia boss Jensen Huang said computers based on the emerging technology are as much as 30 years away.

Markets will be closed on Thursday for a national day of mourning to mark the death of former President Jimmy Carter.

Declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 1.21-to-1 ratio on the NYSE and by a 1.98-to-1 ratio on the Nasdaq.

The S&P 500 posted four new 52-week highs and 29 new lows, while the Nasdaq Composite recorded 42 new highs and 116 new lows.

Volume on U.S. exchanges was 15.86 billion shares, compared with the 12.29 billion average for the full session over the last 20 trading days.

Weekly jobless claims reach new 11-month low

Lucia Mutikani
REUTERS

Hiring has slowed, with the ADP National Employment Report showing private payrolls increased by 122,000 jobs in December. OCTAVIO JONES/REUTERS FILE

WASHINGTON – The number of Americans filing new applications for unemployment benefits fell to an 11-month low last week, pointing to a stable labor market, though a slowdown in hiring has led some laid-off workers to experience long bouts of joblessness.

Signs of a steadily cooling labor market could allow the Federal Reserve to keep interest rates unchanged in January against the backdrop of still high inflation.

The U.S. central bank last month projected a shallower path of rate cuts this year than had been forecast in September, when it launched its policy-easing cycle.

Fed Governor Christopher Waller said on Wednesday that he expected further rate cuts, adding that the pace of the reductions "will depend on how much progress we make on inflation, while keeping the labor market from weakening."

"The Fed says rate cuts from here on out will be gradual," said Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics. "Today's claims data say that they need not be in a rush to ease monetary conditions. Fed policy is aimed at supporting the economy and the job market before a recession shapes up."

Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 10,000 to a seasonally adjusted 201,000 for the week ended Jan. 4, the lowest level since February 2024, the Labor Department said on Wednesday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 218,000 claims for the latest week.

The report was published a day early as federal government offices are closed on Thursday in honor of former President Jimmy Carter who died on Dec. 29 at the age of 100.

Though claims tend to be volatile at the turn of the year, they have bounced around levels associated with low layoffs that are underpinning the labor market and broader economy. The four-week average of claims, which strips out seasonal fluctuations from the data, dropped 10,250 to 213,000 last week.

"The low level of claims is consistent with a labor market that continues to be characterized by a low pace of layoffs," said Nancy Vanden Houten, lead U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "The initial claims data will be subject to seasonal noise for at least a few more weeks, but we don't expect claims to fall much below current levels.

Minutes of the Fed's Dec. 17-18 meeting published on Wednesday showed policymakers viewed labor market conditions as "gradually easing," and saw "no signs of rapid deterioration."

They, however, noted "that labor market indicators merited close monitoring."

Stable labor market

Labor market stability was underscored by government data on Tuesday showing an increase in job openings in November, with 1.13 vacancies for every unemployed person, up from 1.12 in October. Uncertainty over the impact of proposed policies from President-elect Donald Trump's incoming administration is also seen causing the Fed to pause rate cuts this month.

Trump has pledged to cut taxes, impose or massively raise tariffs on imports and deport millions of undocumented immigrants, plans which economists warned would stoke inflation.

Those concerns are weighing on investor sentiment.

U.S. Treasury prices fell, with the yield on the 10-year note rising to the highest level since April. Stocks on Wall Street declined in response, while the dollar gained versus a basket of currencies.

The central bank lowered its benchmark overnight interest rate by 25 basis points to the 4.25%-4.50% range last month. The Fed, however, projected only two rate cuts this year compared to the four it had forecast in September. The policy rate was hiked by 5.25 percentage points in 2022 and 2023 to tame inflation.

While layoffs have remained low by historical standards, hiring has slowed, with the ADP National Employment Report on Wednesday showing private payrolls increased by 122,000 jobs in December after rising 146,000 in November. Economists had forecast private employment rising by 140,000.

Sluggish hiring means some out-of-work people are facing long spells of unemployment. The number of people receiving benefits after an initial week of aid, a proxy for hiring, increased 33,000 to a seasonally adjusted 1.867 million during the week ending Dec. 28, the claims report showed.

Part of the elevation in the so-called continuing claims has been attributed to difficulties stripping out seasonal fluctuations. With the median duration of unemployment nearing a three-year high in November, economists will be hoping for an improvement when the government publishes its closely watched employment report for December on Friday.

Nonfarm payrolls likely increased by 160,000 in December, a Reuters survey showed, as the boost from the end of disruptions from hurricanes and strikes by factory workers at Boeing and another aerospace company faded.

The economy added 227,000 jobs in November. The unemployment rate is forecast to be unchanged at 4.2%.

"A low hiring environment continues to pose upside risk to continuing claims," said Gisela Hoxha, an economist at Citigroup.

Workers at Kentucky battery plant file to hold union election

Nora Eckert
REUTERS

DETROIT – The United Auto Workers union is petitioning the National Labor Relations Board to hold an election at a Kentucky battery plant run by a Ford Motor joint venture, the union said in a release Wednesday.

The BlueOval SK plant, owned by a partnership of South Korea's SK On and Ford, is the latest battery battleground for the union as it seeks to grow its decreasing membership and secure jobs as the industry electrifies.

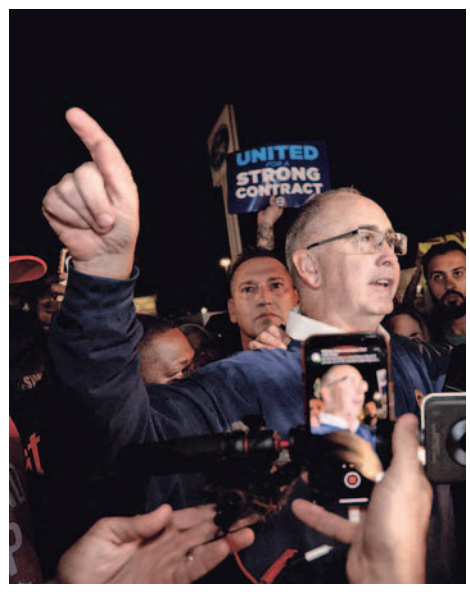
A representative for BlueOval SK said most workers at the battery facility have not yet been hired, and called the union's petition "premature."

"The UAW is trying to rush BlueOval SK into unionization before our full workforce has the opportunity to make a truly free and informed choice," the statement said.

About 750 workers have been hired in Kentucky, and the joint venture is expecting to bring on a total of 5,000 workers across two battery plants, the representative said. The first of those battery plants is slated to start production this year.

UAW President Shawn Fain has sought to expand on a historic win last year at a Volkswagen plant in Tennessee. The labor group has not won a significant vote since, suffering a defeat at a Mercedes plant in Alabama in May.

The UAW invested $40 million last year to organize non-union automakers across the U.S., a push that included companies such as Tesla and Toyota.



UAW President Shawn Fain, seen during a strike in Michigan in 2023, has sought to expand on a historic win last year at a Volkswagen plant in Tennessee. REBECCA COOK/REUTERS FILE

Battery plants partly owned by Detroit's automakers were a major sticking point during the union's six-week strike against Ford, General Motors and Jeep maker Stellantis in late 2023.

The union previously notched victories with Ultium Cells, a joint venture between GM and LG Energy Solution at plants in Ohio and Tennessee.

In June 2024, it reached a tentative contract at an Ohio GM battery plant, and in September, GM agreed to recognize the union at an Ultium plant in Tennessee.

Companies can agree to voluntarily recognize workers once a majority sign cards supporting unionization, which is what happened with the Ultium facility in Tennessee.

In cases where the company does not agree to do this, there is an election, overseen by the NLRB, where workers must vote by majority to unionize.

A union can file a petition for such an election after collecting signatures from at least 30% of workers, according to the NLRB.

The UAW said in November that a "supermajority" of workers at the Kentucky facility had signed cards indicating their support for joining the union, without specifying the percentage.

Some labor experts say it is not surprising that the union is trying to organize the current population of workers at the battery facility instead of waiting for it to expand to its full workforce, given that there have been frequent delays around EV-related plants.

Art Wheaton, a labor professor at Cornell University, added that if the union wins this election but future hired workers do not support it, they can always move to decertify the labor group at the facility.

An election date has not yet been set, but it typically takes several weeks between the union filing for an election and it being held.

While the union got support from President Joe Biden – including in person at its picket lines during the strike – Fain and President-elect Donald Trump have a more contentious relationship.

The incoming president has said the union leader should be fired, and Fain said before the election that if Trump won, it would be a "complete disaster for the working class."

CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Survivors relive night of fear and panic

Joe Brock and Matt McKnight
REUTERS

PASADENA, Calif. – When gas canisters at his neighbors' homes began exploding under the heat of the flames, Kevin Williams knew it was time to run.

"The wind whipped up, the flames were up about 30 or 40 feet high, and you hear 'pop, pop, pop.' It sounded like a warzone," Williams told Reuters at an evacuation center in Pasadena.

At least five people were killed as several fast-growing wildfires raged out of control on Wednesday near Los Angeles, destroying hundreds of buildings, scorching hillsides and prompting some 100,000 people to evacuate their homes.

The biggest blaze has consumed more than 15,800 acres in the Pacific Palisades, a wealthy neighborhood in west Los Angeles.

Another fire started in Eaton Canyon in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains north of Los Angeles. It has since spread to 10,600 acres, shocking residents like Williams who lives in the suburb of Altadena.

"I told my family, we don't have to worry about this ... there's no way in the world that the fire is going to get down here. Ha! It did," said Williams, who fled with his wife, son and two dogs as homes around them burst into flames.

"There were two big explosions that actually shifted the ground, and so I knew it was time to get out. You know, there's a time to be brave, and there is a time to use some common sense."

Debris is left behind Wednesday after a wildfire burned in Pasadena, Calif. ZAYDEE SANCHEZ/REUTERS

Hundreds of people who escaped in the dead of night were hunkered down at the Pasadena Convention Center, some sleeping under Red Cross blankets, others nursing wounds in wheelchairs as volunteers handed out water and bananas.

Never before

Residents told Reuters they had witnessed many fires break out in the dry, dusty hills outside Los Angeles before, but were left aghast as they watched urban homes set ablaze by the fiery embers whisked through suburbs by howling winds.

"We've had fires over the years but not something like this," said Frances Colella, a 71-year-old retiree, resting in a wheelchair alongside dozens of others.

Colella fled with her husband and their three dogs to their 104-year-old mother's house in the neighboring suburb of La Canada Flintridge, only to find the fire had followed them, forcing a second evacuation into Pasadena.

"It's a really sad occurrence and I can't remember anything like this," she said.

Residents described emotions of fear, relief and uncertainty, not sure if their houses will be standing when they are able to return as fires continue to spread across swaths of Los Angeles County.

Thomas Hutchinson, who lives in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, said the last thing he remembers was seeing smoke in his house before receiving an alert on his phone from the emergency services to evacuate.

Hutchinson, 66 and disabled, called 911 but was told no one could help him. In a stroke of fortune, an ambulance passed by his road and whisked him to safety. As Hutchinson watched houses burning around him, the retiree's only concern was saving Rusty, his unflappable brown dog.

"I would have stayed up there if they wouldn't let me take him ... I don't go anywhere without him," Hutchinson said.

"I call him Rusty the wonder dog."

Los Angeles

Continued from Page 1NN

To the east, in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, the Eaton Fire claimed another 10,600 acres, another 1,000 structures, and killed at least five people, officials said. Private forecaster AccuWeather estimated initial damage and economic loss at more than $50 billion.

"We're facing a historic natural disaster. And I think that can't be stated strong enough," Kevin McGowan, director of emergency management for Los Angeles County, told a news conference.

Even though forecasters said winds would subside on Wednesday night, so-called red flag conditions were expected to remain until Friday.

Nearly 1 million homes and businesses lost power in Los Angeles County, according to PowerOutage.us. School was canceled throughout Los Angeles County at least through Thursday, said Superintendent Alberto Carvalho.

Water woes

Besides the two major fires, four smaller fires in the county stretched firefighting resources that had already been exhausted.

"There are not enough firefighters in L.A. County to address four separate fires of this magnitude," said Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone.

Firefighters from six other states were being rushed to California, while an additional 250 engine companies with 1,000 personnel were being moved from Northern California to Southern California, Marrone said in a later news conference.

Water shortages caused some hydrants to run dry in upscale Pacific Palisades, officials said.

"We pushed the system to the extreme. We're fighting a wildfire with urban water systems, and that is really challenging," Janisse Quinones, chief executive of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, told a news conference.

Pacific Palisades relies on three tanks that hold about a million gallons each, and the demand for water to fight fires at lower elevations was making it difficult to refill water tanks at higher elevations, she said.

Nestled in the hills with spectacular ocean views, Pacific Palisades is one of the most expensive neighborhoods in the country with a typical home valued at $3.7 million as of the end of 2023, according to Zillow, more than all but four other zip codes in the United States.

It is also home to many film, television and music stars including Jamie Lee Curtis, Mandy Moore and Mark Hamill, all forced to flee their homes.

With the so-called Sunset Fire burning 10 acres in Hollywood Hills late on Wednesday, the Los Angeles Fire Department issued an evacuation order for people in an area within Hollywood Boulevard on the south, Mulholland Drive on the north, the 101 Freeway on the east and Laurel Canyon Boulevard on west – all iconic addresses for people in the entertainment industry.

The fires struck at an especially vulnerable time for Southern California, which has yet to see significant rainfall since the start of the water year in October.

Then came the powerful Santa Ana winds, bringing dry desert air from the east toward the coastal mountains, fanning the flames of the wildfires while blowing over the hilltops and down through the canyons.

Scientists said the fires, erupting well outside of the traditional wildfire season, mark the latest in weather extremes that are likely to escalate further as global temperatures continue to climb in coming decades.

President Joe Biden, who stayed put in Los Angeles after Air Force One was grounded due to high winds on Tuesday, joined California Gov. Gavin Newsom at a Santa Monica fire station to get a briefing firefighting efforts.

"The impacts of (the fires include) over one thousand structures already destroyed, a hundred-plus thousand people that have been evacuated, lives lost, traditions, lifestyles, places torn asunder," said Newsom, who declared a state of emergency on Tuesday.

Biden declared a major disaster for California and pledged any help he could provide in his final days in office before handing off to President-elect Donald Trump on Jan. 20.

"We're doing anything and everything and as long as it takes to contain these fires ... to make sure you get back to normal," Biden said. "It's going to be a hell of a long way. It's going to take time."

Multiple fires cover the Los Angeles skyline with smoke on Wednesday. CARLIN STIEHL/REUTERS

▲ Smoke and flames overwhelm a commercial area in Altadena, Calif.
JOSH EDELSON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

◀ A palm tree burns amid the Eaton Fire in Altadena, Calif., on Wednesday.
DAVID SWANSON/ REUTERS

DOJ won't release all of Trump report

Move protects ongoing case against associates

Sarah N. Lynch and Andrew Goudsward
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Justice Department will not make public for now special counsel Jack Smith's report on Donald Trump's retention of classified records, it said on Wednesday, citing the ongoing prosecutions of two associates of the president-elect.

That portion of Smith's report will be made available to certain members of Congress charged with judicial oversight, the department said in a filing with an Atlanta-based federal appeals court.

The department said Smith has completed his two-volume report on Trump, and that Attorney General Merrick Garland plans for now to publicly release only the first section related to Trump's efforts to subvert the 2020 presidential election.

While the department dropped both criminal prosecutions of Trump following his November election, it is pushing ahead with a case against two other defendants, Waltine Nauta and Carlos De Oliveira, who worked for Trump, over the documents.

Justice Department regulations require Smith to submit a final report at the end of his investigation.

It was unclear how much information it would contain that has yet to be disclosed in the now-dismissed criminal case Smith brought against Trump over the 2020 election and a 700-page report by a congressional panel that examined similar events.

On Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon, who oversaw the classified documents case, temporarily blocked the department from releasing the report following a request from Nauta and De Oliveira.

The Justice Department said the limited disclosure of the documents report to members of congressional leadership would further the public interest while safeguarding the two remaining defendants' interests.

U.S. prosecutors charged Trump with illegally retaining classified records after departing the White House in January 2021 and trying to obstruct the government's efforts to get them returned.

They also accused Trump of trying to obstruct the government from certifying President Joe Biden's 2020 election victory over Trump.

The Justice Department abandoned both prosecutions against Trump, citing its longstanding policy against prosecuting a sitting president.

Prosecutors have urged the appeals court to revive their case against Nauta and De Oliveira, who pleaded not guilty to obstruction charges. Cannon previously dismissed all charges after ruling that Smith was improperly appointed as special counsel.

Justice Department regulations require special counsel Jack Smith to submit a final report at the end of his investigation. KEVIN WURM/REUTERS FILE

President-elect Donald Trump and Melania Trump arrive at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda in Washington on Wednesday. TING SHEN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Agenda

Continued from Page 1NN

that, given their narrow margin of control, the two-step approach runs the risk of failing to pass the second bill extending Trump's tax cuts.

"We're looking at the one bill versus two bills. Whatever it is, doesn't matter, we're going to get the result," he told reporters as he made his way through the Capitol.

They will also have to grapple with how to offset the effects of fresh tax cuts on the nation's growing $36 trillion debt.

In a possible sign of things to come, Trump had to intervene in the House last week when Speaker Mike Johnson initially fell short of the votes needed for reelection to his top post. After nearly two hours of negotiations, a call from Trump helped sway two hard-line Republican opponents to change their positions and support Johnson.

"None of this happens without White House leadership. The margins are simply too thin," Republican Sen. Thom Tillis told reporters. "President Trump gets MVP status for solving the speaker vote. And we're going to need him to play MVP on getting these bills done. Just common sense."

On Friday, the president-elect is due to begin three days of meetings with House Republicans at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

"He needs to hear what our impressions are in terms of how we're going to get where we all want to go," said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, who was hosting Wednesday's meeting.

Republicans intend to pass Trump's agenda by using a complex legislative maneuver that would allow them to bypass Senate Democratic opposition. Republicans' 53-47 majority in the Senate is too narrow to otherwise overcome the chamber's 60-vote filibuster for most legislation.

In the House, a 219-seat majority is expected to dwindle to 217-215 after Trump takes office in less than two weeks. Two House Republicans are poised to leave Congress and join his administration.

'He has to tell us'

Trump himself has complicated matters up to now by offering no clear guidance, saying he prefers one bill but could accept two. On Tuesday, Trump said he wants Congress to avoid default on the $36 trillion U.S. debt by extending the federal borrowing limit.

> **"None of this happens without White House leadership. The margins are simply too thin. President Trump gets MVP status for solving the speaker vote. And we're going to need him to play MVP on getting these bills done. Just common sense."**
>
> **Sen. Thom Tillis**
> R-N.C.

"He has to tell us what he wants and what he needs," said House Budget Committee Chairman Jodey Arrington. "That's a call he has to make."

Trump was expected to meet on Friday with members of the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus. Lawmakers and aides said he would also meet with committee chairs on Saturday and with other House Republicans on Sunday.

U.S. Rep. Ralph Norman, a Freedom Caucus member and one of the two Republican holdouts who Trump persuaded to support Johnson last week, said he intends to ask Trump to use his leverage to back aggressive spending reductions that would help compensate for a higher federal debt ceiling.

U.S. Rep. Dan Crenshaw, who will meet with Trump on Sunday, sees the discussions as a starting gun for the president-elect's second-term engagement with Capitol Hill.

"Trump has a history of being the most involved president with members of Congress," Crenshaw said. "And so this is just the beginning of it."

Some Republicans cautioned that Trump could overplay his hand if he takes too strong a role in legislative negotiations.

"We're independent. I mean, we're a co-equal branch of government. Sometimes we forget that the president doesn't rule over the Senate and the House. I think that was the mistake that he learned the first time," said U.S. Rep. Kevin Hern, who chairs the Republican Policy Committee in the House.

Hern said he will be among lawmakers who meet with Trump on Sunday.

Trump urged to continue resettling at-risk Afghans

Hundreds of veterans, others sign letter that advocates for program

Jonathan Landay
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Hundreds of veterans and current and former U.S. officials want President-elect Donald Trump to preserve U.S. special visa and resettlement programs for Afghans at risk of retribution for working for the United States during the 20-year war against the Taliban, according to a letter reviewed by Reuters.

The letter, signed by the veterans, officials and others, will be sent to Trump and congressional leaders and was organized by #AfghanEvac, the leading coalition of groups that work with the U.S. government to help Afghans start new lives in the United States.

"Many of us have worked closely with Afghan interpreters, soldiers and families who risked everything to protect and guide us," said a draft of the letter. "To abandon them now would be a betrayal of the values we fought to defend and the trust built through years of shared struggle and sacrifice."

The letter calls on Trump and congressional leaders to continue funding the resettlement of at-risk Afghans and their families and for Congress to approve an additional 50,000 Special Immigration Visas, or SIVs.

The current cap of 50,500 SIVs is expected to run out late this summer or early fall.

The Trump transition team did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Shawn VanDiver, the head of #AfghanEvac, said the letter reflected concerns that Trump will curtail the SIV and resettlement programs as part of his promised crackdown on immigration.

"There's a real fear that President Trump and Stephen Miller will once again erect bureaucratic barriers that slow down or even stop the SIV and refugee resettlement programs, abandoning our Afghan allies once more," VanDiver told Reuters.

Miller was the architect of Trump's first-term hard-line immigration policies and is expected to maintain that role as deputy chief of staff when Trump is sworn in for a second time on Jan. 20.

Former U.S. officials and immigration advocates say Miller instituted during Trump's first term bureaucratic hurdles, including "extreme vetting," that contributed to a slowdown in SIV processing and a massive application backlog.

However, Trump's incoming national security adviser, Michael Waltz, a former U.S. special forces officer who served in Afghanistan, has fiercely advocated for the SIV and resettlement programs.

His office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump made immigration a major issue of his presidential campaign, promising to ramp up border security and deport record numbers of illegal immigrants. He tried during his first term to restrict legal immigration.

VanDiver said that as of Wednesday afternoon, the letter had been signed online by more than 380 veterans, including Jack McCain, the son of the late Sen. John McCain, former and current federal, state and local officials, and many ordinary Americans.

He planned to send the letter to the Trump transition team on Friday and hand-deliver it to Republican and Democratic congressional leaders next week.

More than 183,000 at-risk Afghans and family members have been resettled in the United States since the Taliban seized Kabul as the last U.S. troops withdrew in August 2021, according to the State Department.

Afghans who worked for the U.S. military, civilian agencies or other U.S.-affiliated groups continue seeking resettlement amid U.N. reports that the Taliban have killed, arrested and tortured hundreds of former officials and soldiers.

The Taliban, who instituted a general amnesty for officials and troops of the former U.S.-backed government, deny the U.N. charges.

There currently are more than 20,000 SIV applications being processed, said a State Department official who spoke on condition of anonymity. They do not include applicants' families.

About 40% of completed applications have been rejected.

More than 183,000 at-risk Afghans and family members have been resettled in the U.S. since the Taliban seized Kabul in August 2021, according to the State Department. SAYED HASSIB/REUTERS FILE

Polar bears are seen in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. ANWR's 1.6 million-acre coastal area along the Beaufort Sea is estimated to have up to 11.8 billion barrels of recoverable oil. U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE ALASKA IMAGE LIBRARY VIA REUTERS FILE

No bids in Alaska wildlife refuge drilling auction

Richard Valdmanis and Timothy Gardner
REUTERS

The U.S. Interior Department said on Wednesday a congressionally mandated oil and gas drilling lease auction in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge received no bids from energy companies.

Outgoing President Joe Biden's administration billed the outcome as proof the 19 million-acre refuge, home to species including polar bears and Porcupine caribou, should remain off-limits to fossil fuel development, even as President-elect Donald Trump seeks to encourage expanded drilling there.

"The lack of interest from oil companies in development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge reflects what we and they have known all along – there are some places too special and sacred to put at risk with oil and gas drilling," said acting Deputy Interior Secretary Laura Daniel-Davis.

The U.S. was scheduled to hold a federal auction for some 400,000 acres of the refuge, the minimum required by the 2017 Tax Act, on Friday, but had required bidders to express interest in advance by a Jan. 6 deadline.

The lack of interest means no auction will be held.

Trump's previous administration had sold oil and gas leases in ANWR in 2021, but the sale generated just $14.4 million in high bids, with an Alaska state agency as the sole bidder for most of the acreage sold.

ANWR's 1.6 million-acre coastal area along the Beaufort Sea is estimated to have up to 11.8 billion barrels of recoverable oil, according to government surveys. But oil companies have been hesitant to pursue the resources in part because of high costs of development and public relations challenges around drilling in a wildlife sanctuary.

A Native group, Voice of the Arctic Inupiat, which favors drilling, said in a statement ahead of the auction that the sale's small size undermined economic potential for the region.

The push to open the refuge has been decried by other Native groups including the Gwich'in Steering Committee, which represents tribes that depend on the caribou for subsistence.

The failed lease sale "clearly demonstrates that even oil companies recognize what we have known all along: drilling in the Arctic Refuge is not worth the economic risk and liability that results from development on sacred lands without the consent of Indigenous Peoples," the committee said in a release.

On Monday, Alaska sued the Biden administration over the planned sale saying curbs on land that Interior offered in ANWR made it "impossible or impracticable to develop." The suit said that when combined with the department's cancellation of the leases granted during the last days of Trump's first presidency, the state will get just a fraction of the $1.1 billion the federal government estimated it would get in revenues from energy development.

US to build new stockpile of bird flu vaccines for poultry flocks

Leah Douglas and Tom Polansek
REUTERS

The U.S. will rebuild a stockpile of bird flu vaccines for poultry that match the strain of the virus circulating in commercial flocks and wild birds, the Department of Agriculture said on Wednesday, in a sign of the widespread and devastating nature of the nation's persistent outbreak.

The outbreak, which began in poultry in early 2022, has killed more than 130 million commercial, backyard and wild birds in all 50 states, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Deaths of millions of egg-laying hens pushed wholesale egg prices to record highs last month.

Bird flu is also circulating among dairy cattle herds and has infected nearly 70 people, most of them farm workers exposed to sick poultry or cattle. The U.S. reported its first human death related to bird flu on Monday.

The U.S. built a poultry vaccine stockpile after the prior major bird flu outbreak in 2014 and 2015, though the vaccines were never used, the agency said in a news release.

"USDA believes it is prudent to again pursue a stockpile that matches current outbreak strains," the release said.

Egg and turkey farm groups have called for deploying a vaccine, citing the economic toll for farmers of killing their flocks.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has said such deployment would not be possible in the short term, in part due to trade risks. Many countries ban imports of vaccinated poultry over concerns the vaccine could mask the presence of the virus.

The vaccines purchased by the USDA following the prior bird flu outbreak were developed by Merck & Co., Ceva and one by U.S. government researchers, said David Suarez, who was acting laboratory director of the USDA's Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory in Athens, Georgia, in a 2023 interview.

"All the vaccines they purchased expired, and they threw it away," Suarez said in 2023.

Suarez at the time said there was limited appetite for rebuilding a vaccine stockpile until it was likely birds would be vaccinated.

"There's not an appetite of using the limited resources on something that only has a shelf life of two to three years," he said.

Animal health company Zoetis reached out to the USDA during the 2022 outbreak and was told the government did not plan to make new purchases for its vaccine stockpile, the company said in 2023.

The USDA also said it has enrolled 28 states in its national bulk milk testing program to detect bird flu in dairy herds, and that testing so far had not detected new infected herds in states that previously were virus-free.

Study finds 'ghost guns' have surged since 2017

Untraceable weapons reported in more crimes

Sarah N. Lynch
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – The number of untraceable, privately made "ghost guns" recovered at crime scenes surged nearly 1,600% between 2017 and 2023, according to the results of a new federal gun trafficking study released on Wednesday.

The study's results, announced by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, come after President Joe Biden and Attorney General Merrick Garland in April 2021 directed the agency to oversee a new research initiative to better understand how criminals in the United States obtain their guns.

The study found between 2017 and 2023, 92,702 suspected privately made firearms, or ghost guns, which can be obtained without background checks and do not contain serial numbers, were recovered and reported to law enforcement.

During that same time frame, the number of ghost guns recovered in crimes grew from 1,629 to 27,490, the ATF said. About 1,700 of them have been tied to homicides, while another 4,000 have been linked to a number of other violent crimes.

The recoveries of illicit machine gun conversion devices, which are used to convert semiautomatic weapons into machine guns, also increased 784%, from 658 in 2019 to 5,816 in 2023, the ATF found.

The Biden administration has sought to crack down on the rise of unregulated ghost guns.

In October, the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments over the legality of a Biden administration-led effort to regulate them after a lower court found the ATF had exceeded its authority.

The justices signaled a willingness to uphold the rule, and a decision is expected by the end of June.

Steven Dettelbach, the ATF's director, said on Wednesday that the study's findings overall support the need for more background checks .

"The data show that in 60% of trafficking investigations, the end recipient of a trafficking firearm is a convicted felon," he told reporters at a virtual news conference.

IN BRIEF

Second US port strike averted as union, employers reach deal

The union representing 45,000 dockworkers on the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts and their employers on Wednesday said they reached a tentative deal on a new six-year contract, averting further strikes that could have snarled supply chains and taken a toll on the U.S. economy.

The International Longshoremen's Association and the United States Maritime Alliance employer group, in a joint statement, called the agreement a "win-win." The deal includes a resolution in automation, which had been the thorniest issue on the table.

"This agreement protects current ILA jobs and establishes a framework for implementing technologies that will create more jobs while modernizing East and Gulf coast ports – making them safer and more efficient, and creating the capacity they need to keep our supply chains strong," the groups said.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The talks had been extended until Jan. 15 to hammer a deal on automation. Shipping industry executives, customers and analysts had been concerned that the parties would be unable to overcome their impasse, leading to a second ILA strike.

A three-day ILA strike in October had triggered a surge in shipping prices and cargo backlogs at the 36 affected ports. Longshoremen returned to work after employers agreed to a 62% wage increase over the next six years.

Supreme Court Justice Alito speaks to Trump over phone

WASHINGTON – Conservative Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito said he spoke to Donald Trump by phone on Tuesday to recommend a former law clerk for a job in a government position, adding he and Trump did not discuss the president-elect's legal woes.

"William Levi, one of my former law clerks, asked me to take a call from President-elect Trump regarding his qualifications to serve in a government position," Alito said in a statement shared with Reuters by a spokesperson of the U.S. Supreme Court.

"I agreed to discuss this matter with President-elect Trump, and he called me yesterday afternoon," Alito added.

"We also did not discuss any other matter that is pending or might in the future come before the Supreme Court or any past Supreme Court decisions involving the President-elect," the statement said.

Trump has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to prevent a New York state court from sentencing him for his conviction on criminal charges stemming from hush money paid to an adult film star. On Tuesday, a New York appeals court denied his effort to halt sentencing scheduled for Friday in Manhattan.

In Wednesday's filing, his lawyers asked the U.S. Supreme Court to immediately order a stay in the case, as he seeks an appeal to resolve questions of presidential immunity.

Santos' sentencing delayed after he asked to make more podcasts

NEW YORK – A federal judge on Wednesday delayed George Santos' sentencing on fraud and identity theft charges after the disgraced former U.S. congressman requested time to continue his "Pants on Fire" podcast to help pay off more than a half million dollars he owes.

U.S. District Judge Joanna Seybert in Central Islip, New York, rescheduled Santos' sentencing to April 25 from Feb. 7, calling it a "one-time courtesy" to serve the ends of justice.

Santos' lawyers had sought a six-month delay, calling it a routine and "hardly extraordinary" request that would boost victims' recoveries and allow more preparation for sentencing.

Prosecutors ridiculed the request, saying Santos wanted the extra time to promote himself, and that "allowing Santos to stave off sentencing specifically to monetize his infamy would send a message to the public that crime pays."

Neither Santos' lawyers nor the office of U.S. Attorney Breon Peace in Brooklyn immediately responded to requests for comment.

Santos, 36, faces up to 22 years in prison after pleading guilty last August to wire fraud and identity theft, and agreed not to appeal any sentence of around eight years or fewer.

His plea agreement also calls for the payment of $578,753 in restitution and forfeiture, which his lawyers said the podcast would help fund. The identity theft charge carries a mandatory two-year prison term.

Reuters

Poilievre rides wave of anti-Trudeau discontent

Canada opposition leader more aligned with Trump

Anna Mehler Paperny
REUTERS

TORONTO – Justin Trudeau's successor as Liberal leader and Canada's prime minister will soon face a bruising election against a sharp-tongued populist riding a wave of anti-Trudeau sentiment.

Poll after poll has shown career politician Pierre Poilievre and his Conservative Party handily winning Canada's next federal election, which by law must be held by Oct. 20 and may happen earlier.

Poilievre, 45, took the Conservative helm in 2022, framing himself as a champion of common people fighting a perceived elite, drawing comparisons to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump.

An Angus Reid poll published on Friday, before Trudeau announced his intent to resign once his party finds a new leader, found Poilievre would beat any of the expected candidates for Liberal leader.

Poilievre largely owes his rise to his acerbic communication style, voter fatigue with Trudeau and frustration with inflation, observers said. He was ejected from the House of Commons in April for calling Trudeau a "wacko."

"Pierre Poilievre has really tapped into the frustrations of Canadians on affordability," said Jamie Ellerton, principal of public relations firm Conaptus and a former Conservative staffer.

"There's clearly a desire for change."

While he has offered few detailed policies, Poilievre capitalizes on three-word slogans such as "ax the tax," referring to Trudeau's unpopular carbon price that aims to reduce emissions. Poilievre has not said if he will remove the tax only for consumers, many of whom already receive a rebate, or also for industry, but has said he would present a different plan to slow climate change.

Canadian Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre took the party's helm in 2022, framing himself as a champion of common people fighting a perceived elite.
PATRICK DOYLE/REUTERS FILE

A spokesperson for Poilievre did not respond to requests for comment.

Poilievre's timing helps: Trudeau's government has been in power for nine years.

"The average shelf life of prime ministers has been a decade," said University of Toronto politics professor emeritus Nelson Wiseman.

Trump, speaking on Monday before Trudeau announced his plan to resign, said he was looking forward to working with Poilievre if he wins the next Canadian election.

"It would be very good. Our views would be more aligned, certainly," Trump told the Hugh Hewitt radio show.

Even so, Trump said on Tuesday he might use "economic force" to make Canada a U.S. state. Both Trudeau and Poilievre said on social media that would never happen.

Trucker convoy

Poilievre gained prominence by expressing sympathy for a trucker convoy protesting vaccine mandates and the government more broadly in 2022.

Like Trump, he often criticizes the media. But their interests are different, as Trump threatens broad tariffs that would cripple Canada's economy, which relies on exports to the U.S.

"In some respects, (Poilievre) won't be that different from Trudeau on the trade files, simply because the issues are the same, the goals are the same," said Western University politics associate professor Adam Harmes.

The Conservatives would prefer to run against Trudeau in an election, given his unpopularity.

Trudeau's impending resignation poses a problem for the Conservatives, Harmes said. But "they're still going to win the next election. It would take some sort of black-swan event for them not to."

Anticipating Trudeau's departure, the Conservatives have widened their attacks to the Liberal Party, branding potential leadership candidate Mark Carney, a former governor of the Bank of Canada, "Carbon Tax Carney," Harmes said. Carney said on Monday he was considering a leadership bid.

Even without Trudeau as a foil, the Conservatives have the momentum, Wiseman said.

"Poilievre could go to sleep now, and they're going to win a big majority."

Following through on simple Conservative slogans such as "build the homes" could be more difficult, Harmes said.

"It will be interesting to see how much people like Pierre Poilievre for his own sake," said University of Regina professor Jim Farney. "Rather than just a choice for change."

Donald Trump Jr. made a private visit to Nuuk, Greenland, on Tuesday.
EMIL STACH/RITZAU SCANPIX/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Greenland

Continued from Page 1NN

other nations attack its sovereign borders, although he did not believe the U.S. would invade.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed surprise at Trump's comments about Greenland and Canada, underlining that European partners unanimously uphold the inviolability of borders.

Strained relations

Greenland's relations with Denmark have lately been strained by allegations of mistreatment of Greenlanders. Egede has said the island is not for sale, while in his New Year's speech he stepped up his push for independence. Denmark says the territory's fate can be decided only by Greenlanders.

Greenland's Finance Minister Erik Jensen repeated that Greenland is not for sale. "Our wish is to become independent one day. But our ambition is not to go from being governed by one country to another."

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said on Tuesday she could not imagine Trump's ambitions would lead to U.S. military intervention in Greenland. Denmark's military capabilities there are limited to four inspection vessels, a Challenger surveillance plane and dog sled patrols.

Responding to Trump's threat of tariffs against Denmark, which according to analysts at Danske Bank could potentially be "quite harmful to Danish companies," Frederiksen said she did not think a trade war with the United States was a good way forward.

Denmark is home to Novo Nordisk, Europe's most valuable company, which makes weight-loss drug Wegovy that has become hugely popular in the United States, the Nordic country's biggest trading partner.

Greenland Prime Minister Mute Egede has said the island is not for sale. LEIFF JOSEFSEN/RITZAU SCANPIX VIA REUTERS FILE

The Danish royal palace gave no details of King Frederik's meeting with Greenland's Egede.

While many Greenlanders dream of independence from Denmark, the king remains popular on the island, having spent extended periods there, including a four-month expedition on the ice sheet. Last month, the royal court modified its coat of arms, enlarging a polar bear that symbolizes Greenland.

"He's popular in Greenland. So he can clearly be helpful to the Danish-Greenlandic relationship," Damien Degeorges, a Reykjavik-based consultant specializing in Greenland, told Reuters.

Trump already raised the issue of the U.S. taking over Greenland during his first presidency, but his latest remarks still left many Danes baffled.

"I find it extremely ridiculous," said Jeppe Finne Sorenson, a data engineer in the Danish capital. "We have an alliance, we're allies. So this doesn't really respect that."

US, French troops could secure Syria's border

Turkey threatens action against Kurdish forces

John Irish
REUTERS

PARIS – Talks are taking place on whether U.S. and French troops could secure a border zone in northern Syria as part of efforts to defuse conflict between Turkey and Western-backed Kurdish Syrian forces, a senior Syrian Kurdish official said.

Ankara has warned that it will carry out a cross-border offensive into northeastern Syria against the Kurdish YPG militia if the group does not meet Turkish demands.

Turkey regards the YPG, which spearheads the U.S.-allied Syrian Democratic Forces, as a terrorist group linked to Kurdish PKK militants who for 40 years have waged an insurgency against the Turkish state.

The SDF played an important role in defeating Islamic State militants in Syria from 2014 to 2017. The group still guards IS fighters in prison camps there, but has been on the back foot since rebels ousted Syrian President Bashar Assad on Dec. 8.

French President Emmanuel Macron said earlier this week that Paris would not abandon the SDF, which was one among a myriad of opposition forces during Syria's 13-year-long civil war.

"The United States and France could indeed secure the entire border. We are ready for this military coalition to assume this responsibility," Ilham Ahmed, co-chair of foreign affairs for the Kurdish administration in northern territory outside central Syrian government control, was quoted as saying by TV5 Monde.

"We ask the French to send troops to this border to secure the demilitarized zone, to help us protect the region and establish good relations with Turkey."

Neither France nor Turkey's foreign ministries immediately responded to requests for comment. The U.S. State Department was not immediately available for comment.

It is unclear how receptive Turkey would be to such an initiative, given Ankara has worked for years to secure its border against threats coming from Syria, and has vowed to destroy the YPG.

"As soon as France has convinced Turkey to accept its presence on the border, then we can start the peace process," Ahmed said. "We hope that everything will be settled in the coming weeks."

A source familiar with the matter said such talks were going on, but declined to say how advanced or realistic they were.

A boy walks past murals depicting Kurdish YPG and YPJ flags in Qamishli, Syria, last month. The YPG spearheads the U.S.-allied Syrian Democratic Forces.
ORHAN QEREMAN/REUTERS FILE

Ceasefire efforts

Washington has been brokering ceasefire efforts between Turkish-backed groups and the SDF after fighting that broke out as rebel groups advanced on Damascus and overthrew Assad.

Addressing a news conference in Paris alongside outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot hinted that there were talks on the issue.

"The Syrian Kurds must find their place in this political transition. We owe it to them because they were our brothers in arms against Islamic State," Barrot said.

"We will continue our efforts ... to ensure that Turkey's legitimate security concerns can be guaranteed, but also the security interests of (Syria's) Kurds and their full rights to take part in the construction in the future of their country."

Blinken said it was vital to ensure that the SDF forces continued the job of guarding more than 10,000 detained IS militants as this was a legitimate security interest for both the U.S. and Turkey.

"We have been working very closely with our ally ... Turkey to navigate this transition ... It's a process that will take some time," Blinken said.

The U.S. has about 2,000 troops in Syria who have been working with the SDF to prevent a resurgence of IS.

A French official said France still has dozens of special forces on the ground dating from its earlier support of the SDF, when Paris provided weapons and training.

SPORTS EXTRA

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF ORANGE BOWL PREVIEW

Penn St., Notre Dame charge into semifinals

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Penn State and Notre Dame are vying to end three decade-long national championship droughts and can move a step closer Thursday night when they collide in the Orange Bowl.

One of the two College Football Playoff semifinals, the matchup of seventh-seeded Notre Dame (13-1) and sixth-seeded Penn State (13-2) as part of the debut 12-team bracket, the winner will face either Texas or Ohio State in the CFP national championship on Jan. 20 in Atlanta. The Longhorns and Buckeyes square off Friday night in the other semifinal at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas.

Penn State is coming off a 31-14 quarterfinal victory over Boise State in the Fiesta Bowl on New Year's Eve, which followed a 38-10 win at home over SMU in the first round. Penn State is chasing its third national championship and first since 1986.

Notre Dame, in pursuit of its 12th

See ORANGE BOWL, Page 2NS

CFP semifinals

Orange Bowl
Notre Dame vs. Penn State

Time/TV: Thursday, 7:30 p.m. ET/ESPN

Where: Hard Rock Stadium, Miami Gardens, Fla.

Cotton Bowl
Ohio State vs. Texas

Time/TV: Friday, 7:30 p.m. ET/ESPN

Where: AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas

Penn State running back Kaytron Allen carries against Boise State in the Fiesta Bowl on Dec. 31 in Glendale, Ariz. MARK J. REBILAS/IMAGN IMAGES

NBA

The Cavaliers' Jarrett Allen, left, celebrates with Donovan Mitchell after Wednesday's game against the Oklahoma City Thunder at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland. The Cavaliers won 129-122. JASON MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

CAVS WIN BATTLE OF LEAGUE'S BEST

Jarrett Allen collected 25 points and 12 rebounds to lift the host Cleveland Cavaliers to a 129-122 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Wednesday in a battle of the top two teams in the NBA. Evan Mobley contributed 21 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists for the Cavaliers, who have won 11 in a row overall and improved to 11-0 against Western Conference opponents. Oklahoma City was riding a franchise-record 15-game winning streak into this matchup. **ROUNDUP, 5NS**

NFL keeps watch on Los Angeles wildfires

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

The NFL said Wednesday that the league is keeping tabs on the ongoing wildfires in the Los Angeles area with respect to Monday's NFC wild-card game involving the Minnesota Vikings and host Rams in Inglewood, Calif.

A contingency plan is in place for the contest. The game would be played in Glendale, Ariz., if the location needs to be changed.

"The NFL's priority is the safety of the Los Angeles community," the league said in a statement. "We are grateful for the tireless efforts of the first responders. Our hearts are with Los Angeles and everyone affected by the fires.

"We continue to prepare to play the Vikings-Rams game as scheduled Monday night at SoFi Stadium. As with all games, there are contingency plans in the event a change in location is needed. In this instance, the game would be played on Monday night at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, if necessary.

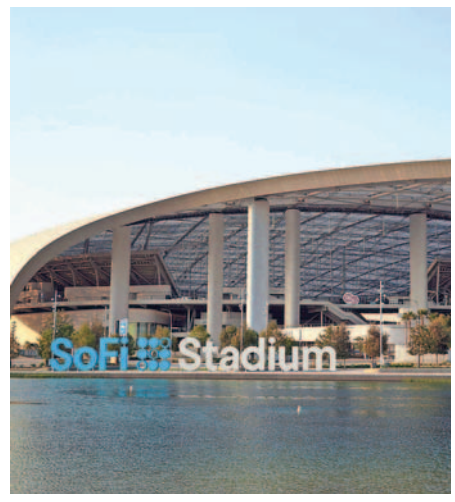
"We will continue to closely monitor developments in the area and will remain in contact with public officials, both clubs and the NFLPA."

Meanwhile, the NHL postponed Wednesday's game pitting the visiting Calgary Flames and Los Angeles Kings. A makeup date was not announced.

"The thoughts of the entire NHL family are with the Kings, hockey fans and the people of the Los Angeles area during this difficult time," the NHL said in a statement.

The Charlotte Hornets flew west on

See WILDFIRES, Page 2NS



SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, Calif., is scheduled to host Monday's Vikings-Rams NFL playoff game. KIRBY LEE/USA TODAY SPORTS

SUBSCRIBER-EXCLUSIVE SECTION

FOOTBALL

NFL NOTEBOOK

Eagles QB Hurts, Packers QB Love practice

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Packers quarterback Jordan Love, left, greets Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts after a 2022 game in Philadelphia. SCOTT TAETSCH/GETTY IMAGES

Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts is back at practice and expected to play in the NFC wild-card game Sunday against the Packers.

Philadelphia (14-3) hosts Green Bay (11-6) in the second meeting between the teams this season. The Eagles beat the Packers 34-29 in Brazil on Sept. 6 in the regular-season opener for both teams.

The Eagles used backup quarterbacks Tanner McKee and Kenny Pickett the past two games with Hurts sidelined by a concussion since Dec. 22.

Green Bay ended the regular season with QB health concerns, too.

Packers coach Matt LaFleur said he expected no lingering injury issues for quarterback Jordan Love, who was unable to finish the team's Week 18 loss to the Chicago Bears due to an elbow injury.

Love said team doctors told him during Sunday's game the pain in his throwing arm should "go away."

"Not sure when, but it's feeling better," Love said.

Love also left the first meeting with the Eagles in the fourth quarter with a knee injury. He threw two TD passes, one interception and was sacked once.

Backup Malik Willis hurt his thumb against the Bears and LaFleur said the Packers almost turned back to Love to hand the ball off.

49ers GM: Ready to pay, all-in on QB Purdy

Any notion the San Francisco 49ers were undecided about their future at quarterback was dispelled by general manager John Lynch on Wednesday.

Lynch made it clear the 49ers are fully committed to keeping Brock Purdy, who is eligible for a contract extension immediately. Purdy had 3,864 passing yards and 20 touchdowns in 2024 but San Francisco missed the playoffs after winning the NFC and finishing as runner-up to the Kansas City Chiefs last season.

"I think what we know about Brock is, he's our guy," Lynch said Wednesday seated to the right of head coach Kyle Shanahan at the team facility in Santa Clara, Calif. "We have interest in Brock being around here for a long, long time. He's done so much for our organization. He's won big games. And you know, had a little tougher task as we all did this year with some of the things that happened throughout the course of the year. We just never could string games where we were all together. Through that he continued to lead, he continued to play at a high level, so we have every interest in him being around.

"The way this goes is these press conferences are necessary but kind of silly. Kyle's coaching, we spend time together all the time, and there's big issues that affect the team, but he's just getting off coaching. He's had his door shut for two days doing exit interviews with players. We'll have some time here in the coming week to sit together and put our whole plan together. That's obviously a priority, that position, and we'll give it that attention."

The top of the market for starting quarterbacks in the NFL is around $60 million annually, a figure reached by Dak Prescott in a four-year agreement last year.

The 49ers have had tense negotiations with key players in the offseason recently, including wide receivers Deebo Samuel, Brandon Aiyuk and left tackle Trent Williams. Purdy said on Monday that his priority is getting a deal done quickly.

49ers remove DC role from Sorensen, promote Kubiak to OC

The San Francisco 49ers have removed Nick Sorensen from his role as defensive coordinator and promoted passing game specialist Klay Kubiak to offensive coordinator, coach Kyle Shanahan said.

Shanahan said he would continue to call the offensive plays.

He also said he would like to retain Sorensen, 46, telling reporters that a move to special teams coordinator is possible.

San Francisco has an opening there after Brian Schneider was fired earlier this week.

Also, assistant head coach Brandon Staley will be a candidate to replace Sorensen as defensive coordinator.

NFL knocking, Belichick busy making waves at North Carolina

New to the social media platform X, Bill Belichick's feed — @unchapelbill — indicates he's minding his own business and chasing quality BBQ during his first month on the job as head coach at North Carolina.

But there appears to be more to the evolving story of "Chapel Bill."

The Las Vegas Raiders, behind minority owner Tom Brady, are among multiple NFL teams that have reached out to Belichick about changing his mind and returning to the league, NFL Network reported.

Brady, who owns a 10 percent stake in the Raiders with business partner Tom Wagner, recently spoke to his coach of 20 years with the New England Patriots about reconsidering, per the report.

However, The Athletic reported on Wednesday that Belichick was in New Jersey for multiple recruiting visits with "no plans to return to the NFL."

Pats to interview Lions DC Glenn

The New England Patriots have added Aaron Glenn to the list of potential candidates to fill their head coaching vacancy, requesting an interview with the Detroit Lions defensive coordinator, according to Sports Illustrated's Albert Breer Wednesday.

Glenn, 52, has been the Lions' DC since 2021. Detroit finished seventh in the league this season in scoring defense (20.1) and 20th in total defense (342.4).

Glenn is the fifth candidate in the Patriots' interview rotation as they search to replace Jerod Mayo, who was fired Sunday after compiling a 4-13 record in his one and only season in Foxborough.

The Patriots have already interviewed former quarterback Byron Leftwich, who most recently worked as the offensive coordinator for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 2019-22, and Pep Hamilton, who was the Houston Texans offensive coordinator in 2022 and held the same position with the Indianapolis Colts from 2013-2015.

New England also reportedly has an in-person interview scheduled for Thursday with former Tennessee Titans coach and longtime Patriots player Mike Vrabel. Vrabel was a coaching and personnel consultant for the Cleveland Browns in the 2024 season, but his contract expired Dec. 30, allowing him to interview with other NFL teams.

Jets interview Chiefs OC Nagy for head coach

The New York Jets completed a head coaching interview with Kansas City Chiefs offensive coordinator Matt Nagy, the team announced Wednesday.

Because Nagy is still working as OC while the Chiefs have a bye for the wild-card round of the playoffs, his interview had to be limited to three hours and take place between Wednesday and the end of wild-card weekend, according to league rules.

Nagy has been the Chiefs' OC for the past two seasons and had a two-year stint in the same position from 2016-17. In between, he compiled a 34-31 record as the coach of the Chicago Bears, making the playoffs twice in four seasons.

Nagy is the fourth candidate to interview for the vacancy left after a season that saw the Jets (5-12) fire head coach Robert Saleh after a 2-3 start and go 3-9 under interim coach Jeff Ulbrich.

Bengals WR Burton accused of assault

Cincinnati Bengals rookie wide receiver Jermaine Burton was accused of assaulting a 19-year-old woman he was dating, though no charges were filed against him, the Cincinnati Enquirer reported Wednesday.

Citing police reports, the Enquirer reported the woman made a 911 call that said Burton assaulted her, including choking, damaged her phone and held a knife to his own neck, threatening to kill himself, per the report. The woman declined to press charges.

A contingency plan is in place for Monday's Vikings-Rams playoff game to be played at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. KIRBY LEE/USA TODAY SPORTS

Wildfires

Continued from Page 1

Wednesday for scheduled NBA games against the Los Angeles Lakers on Thursday and Los Angeles Clippers on Saturday.

"We are in communication with the Lakers and Hornets and continue to closely monitor the situation to determine if any scheduling adjustments are necessary related to tomorrow night's game," NBA spokesman Mike Bass said.

Multiple wildfires ravaged the Los Angeles area on Tuesday and Wednesday, killing at least five people, causing many more to leave their cars in the streets and destroying more than 1,000 structures.

"Our hearts are with those affected by the Palisades wildfires and the first responders protecting our community. Be safe," the Rams wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Orange Bowl

Continued from Page 1

consensus national title and first since 1988, scored a 23-10 quarterfinal victory over No. 2 seed Georgia last Thursday in the Sugar Bowl, snapping a 10-game losing streak in either major bowl games or national championship games.

"I think it's human nature to enjoy people saying good things about you," Notre Dame coach Marcus Freeman said. "It's human nature but we've talked all year about being misfits and that's what we have to continue to be."

Notre Dame ranks third nationally in turnover margin (plus-18) and was plus-2 against Georgia, a big reason it prevailed despite amassing only 244 total yards. Penn State isn't far behind as it is ranked 20th with a plus-10 turnover margin.

Notre Dame safety Xavier Watts has accounted for seven of Notre Dame's takeaways with six interceptions and one fumble recovery.

"I think in a lot of ways, they are built similar to us," Penn State coach James Franklin said. "You look at their turnover ratio numbers, you look at their explosive play defense in terms of defending and limiting explosive plays. ... And they do a great job of not beating themselves, which I think is a really important thing in college football. It starts with that, and then you kind of go from there and play to your strengths and things like that."

Penn State is 4-1 all-time in the Orange Bowl and will make its first appearance since 2006.

Notre Dame's last postseason game in Miami was the 2013 BCS National Championship Game, but it hasn't played in the Orange Bowl since 1996. The Fighting Irish are 2-3 in the Orange Bowl.

Notre Dame's Riley Leonard passes against Georgia in the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 2 in New Orleans. STEPHEN LEW/IMAGN IMAGES

The teams have not met since Sept. 8, 2007, when Penn State won 31-10 at home. The all-time series is tied 9-9-1 and the two schools have met only once in a bowl game with Notre Dame winning the 1976 Gator Bowl.

Kaytron Allen and Nicholas Singleton have powered Penn State's formidable running game, combining for 2,041 yards and 17 touchdowns on the season.

Penn State's leader on defense is Abdul Carter, who has recorded 21.5 tackles for loss and 11 sacks, but his status for the Orange Bowl is unclear due to an arm injury that limited his participation in the Fiesta Bowl.

"He's doing great. His attitude is great. His mentality has been really good," Franklin said.

"I think he's taken the right approach and mentality, and really, it's going to come down to how he feels and how much practice he's able to get during the week."

Notre Dame quarterback Riley Leonard has thrown for 2,383 yards, 18 touchdowns and six interceptions while also rushing for 831 yards and 15 touchdowns. Leonard only threw for 90 yards, but ran for 80 against Georgia.

"You play this game with confidence. And that's where I've seen him grow the most is the confidence that he's playing with," Freeman said.

NHL

WEDNESDAY'S ROUNDUP

Dubois scores pair for Capitals

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

The Capitals' Pierre-Luc Dubois celebrates after scoring in overtime against the Vancouver Canucks on Wednesday in Washington. PATRICK SMITH/GETTY IMAGES

Pierre-Luc Dubois scored twice, including the game-winner with 41 seconds left in overtime, as the Washington Capitals defeated the visiting Vancouver Canucks 2-1 on Wednesday.

Logan Thompson made 30 saves for the Capitals, who have alternated wins and losses over their last eight games.

Conor Garland scored for the Canucks, who have lost three straight and four of six (1-2-3). Kevin Lankinen stopped 16 of 18 shots.

Dubois became a thorn in the Canucks' side early on as he was assessed a double-minor after a heated scuffle with Quinn Hughes.

Dubois scored the game's first goal with 33 seconds remaining in the opening frame. The 26-year-old gloved down a rebound to his stick and chipped a backhand shot over Lankinen's pad.

With under three minutes remaining in the middle frame, the Canucks had a flurry of chances to tie the game with a delayed penalty impending, but Thompson got in front of all of the scoring opportunities.

On the ensuing power play, the Canucks finally struck as Garland found a rebound and fired the puck into the back of the net with 37 seconds left in the period. It was his 11th goal of the season.

Blackhawks 3, Avalanche 1

Connor Bedard had a goal and an assist to back a 35-save effort from Petr Mrazek and lift host Chicago to a win over Colorado.

Ilya Mikheyev and Frank Nazar also scored for Chicago, which ended an eight-game point streak for Colorado (7-0-1).

Avalanche goaltender Trent Miner had 17 saves in his first NHL start. Miner appeared in relief during a Nov. 15 loss against Washington. He rejoined the team this week after Scott Wedgewood (lower body) was placed on injured reserve.

Colorado opened the scoring at 6:14 of the first period on a Juuso Parssinen unassisted goal. The forward raced from the defensive zone and beat Mrazek on a backhand from the right circle.

Mikheyev tied the game 10:34 later, swooping in front to beat Miner after Bedard forced a turnover. Bedard extended his career-best point streak to eight games with the assist. The sophomore has tallied four goals and seven assists over that span.

While Mrazek buoyed the Blackhawks throughout the night, he played especially well during a 12-save second period.

Panthers 4, Utah 1

Jesper Boqvist scored two goals and Sergei Bobrovsky made 27 saves in Florida's win over the Utah Hockey Club in Salt Lake City.

Sam Reinhart and Eetu Luostarinen also scored and Matthew Tkachuk had two assists for the Panthers, who have alternated losses and wins for six games.

Bobrovsky improved to 18-9-1 this season.

Boqvist logged the third multigoal game in his six NHL seasons, his second in his last five games. Boqvist also scored twice in Florida's 5-3 win over the New York Rangers on Dec. 30.

Logan Cooley collected Utah's only goal, and Karel Vejmelka stopped 29 of 31 shots.

The Utah Hockey Club is 1-5-2 in its past eight games, including an 0-3-1 mark on home ice. No team in the NHL has fewer home points (14) than Utah, from a home record of 5-8-4.

Flames at Kings, ppd.

WEDNESDAY'S SUMMARIES

Chicago 3, Colorado 1

Colorado	1	0	0 –	1
Chicago	1	1	1 –	3

First Period–1, Colorado, Parssinen 3, 6:14. 1, Chicago, Mikheyev 8 (Bedard), 16:48. Penalties–None.
Second Period–1, Chicago, Nazar 1 (Dach, Teravainen), 10:17. Penalties–Smith, CHI (Tripping), 2:41. Parssinen, COL (Tripping), 16:05.
Third Period–1, Chicago, Bedard 11 (Bertuzzi, Jones), 11:54. Penalties–Mikheyev, CHI (Tripping), 5:37.
Shots on Goal–Colorado 14-12-10–36. Chicago 8-7-5–20.
Power-play opportunities–Colorado 0 of 2; Chicago 0 of 1.
Goalies–Colorado, Miner 0-1-0 (20 shots-17 saves). Chicago, Mrazek 8-14-1 (36-35).
A–17,667 (19,717).

Washington 2, Vancouver 1 (OT)

Vancouver	0	1	0	0 –	1
Washington	1	0	0	1 –	2

First Period–1, Washington, Dubois 6 (Roy, McMichael), 19:27. Penalties–Sherwood, VAN (Roughing), 4:19. Hughes, VAN (Roughing), 4:19. Wilson, WSH (Roughing), 4:19. McMichael, WSH (Roughing), 4:19. Dubois, WSH (Hooking), 4:19. Dubois, WSH (Roughing), 4:19. Desharnais, VAN (Unsportsmanlike conduct), 10:41.
Second Period–1, Vancouver, Garland 11 (Sherwood, Hughes), 19:23. Penalties–Chychrun, WSH (Hooking), 17:51.
Third Period–None. Penalties–Chychrun, WSH (Delay of Game), 0:34. Di Giuseppe, VAN (Tripping), 6:38. Juulsen, VAN (Unsportsmanlike conduct), 20:00. Wilson, WSH (Unsportsmanlike conduct), 20:00.
Overtime–2, Washington, Dubois 7 (Protas), 4:19. Penalties–None.
Shots on Goal–Vancouver 3-21-6-1–31. Washington 6-5-2-5–18.
Power-play opportunities–Vancouver 1 of 4; Washington 0 of 2.
Goalies–Vancouver, Lankinen (18 shots-16 saves). Washington, Thompson 17-2-2 (31-30).
A–17,941 (18,398).

Florida 4, Utah 1

Florida	0	1	3 –	4
Utah	0	0	1 –	1

First Period–None. Penalties–Tkachuk, FLA (High-sticking), 5:39.
Second Period–1, Florida, Reinhart 23 (Tkachuk, Barkov), 1:05. Penalties–Hayton, UTA (High-sticking), 0:16.
Third Period–1, Florida, Boqvist 8 (Verhaeghe, Lundell), 1:48. 1, Utah, Cooley 11 (Keller, Sergachev), 13:41. 2, Florida, Boqvist 9 (Forsling), 17:59. 1, Florida, Luostarinen 7, 19:38. Penalties–Verhaeghe, FLA (High-sticking), 7:03. Mikkola, FLA (Kneeing), 10:09. Greer, FLA (Roughing), 10:09. Stenlund, UTA (Roughing), 10:09. Bennett, FLA (Slashing), 12:56.
Shots on Goal–Florida 7-13-13–33. Utah 4-17-6–27.
Power-play opportunities–Florida 1 of 1; Utah 1 of 4.
Goalies–Florida, Bobrovsky 18-9-1 (27 shots-26 saves). Utah, Vejmelka 9-11-3 (31-29).
A–11,131 (0).

League Leaders
Goal Scoring

Name	Team	GP	G
Leon Draisaitl	Edmonton	40	29
Brayden Point	Tampa Bay	34	24
Mikko Rantanen	Colorado	41	24
Kyle Connor	Winnipeg	42	23
Kirill Kaprizov	Minnesota	34	23
William Nylander	Toronto	42	23
Mark Scheifele	Winnipeg	42	23
Cole Caufield	Montreal	40	22
Sam Reinhart	Florida	41	22
Jake Guentzel	Tampa Bay	37	21
Travis Konecny	Philadelphia	41	20
Rickard Rakell	Pittsburgh	42	20
John Tavares	Toronto	41	20
Nico Hischier	New Jersey	43	19
Adrian Kempe	L.A. Kings	38	19
Alex Ovechkin	Washington	24	19
Tage Thompson	Buffalo	36	19
Gabriel Vilardi	Winnipeg	42	19
Brandon Hagel	Tampa Bay	38	18
Roope Hintz	Dallas	38	18

MLB

NOTEBOOK

Reports: Giants, Verlander agree on deal

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Three-time Cy Young winner Justin Verlander reportedly has agreed to a one-year contract with the San Francisco Giants. KEN BLAZE/IMAGN IMAGES

Three-time Cy Young Award winner Justin Verlander is in agreement with the San Francisco Giants on a one-year contract pending a physical, ESPN and other outlets reported Tuesday night.

The deal will be for $15 million, ESPN reported.

Verlander, who will turn 42 before the season, will join his fourth major league club and embark on a 20th season in the majors, while San Francisco fills out its starting rotation with an experienced right-hander.

Verlander won the American League Cy Young in 2011, 2019 and 2022 — the first during his 13-year run with the Detroit Tigers and the latter two while pitching for the Houston Astros.

After starting 2023 with the New York Mets, he was sent back to the Astros at the trade deadline and finished out his contract in 2024. He made just 17 starts due to shoulder and neck injuries and pitched to a 5.48 ERA with a 5-6 record, 74 strikeouts and 27 walks.

Verlander's option for 2025 did not vest because he did not pitch the requisite number of innings, making him a free agent.

Verlander is the active major league leader in career innings pitched (3,415⅔), starts (526), wins (262), losses (147) and strikeouts (3,416). The 2011 AL MVP and two-time World Series champ has a career 3.30 ERA and 1.125 WHIP.

Former Orioles LHP Matusz dies

Brian Matusz, a left-hander who spent most of his eight-year Major League Baseball career with the Baltimore Orioles, died Tuesday. He was 37.

The cause of death was not immediately known.

Matusz posted a 27-41 record with a 4.85 ERA in 279 career games (68 starts) with the Orioles (2009-16).

"A staple in our clubhouse from 2009-16, Brian was beloved throughout Birdland, and his passion for baseball and our community was unmatched," the Orioles said in a statement. "He dedicated his time to connecting with any fan he could, was a cherished teammate and always had a smile on his face."

Matusz was traded to the Atlanta Braves in May 2016 but was released one week later. He joined the Chicago Cubs and pitched three innings against the Seattle Mariners on July 31, 2016, his final appearance.

Matusz originally was selected by the Los Angeles Angels in the fourth round of the 2005 MLB draft. He opted to return to college at San Diego before being selected by the Orioles with the No. 4 overall pick in 2008.

Astros trade INF Kessinger to Diamondbacks

The Arizona Diamondbacks acquired infielder Grae Kessinger from the Houston Astros on Wednesday.

The Astros received minor league righty Matthew Linskey in exchange.

Kessinger, 27, batted .131 with one homer and one RBI in 48 games with Houston over the 2023-24 seasons.

Defensively, the 2019 second-round pick has played 14 games at third base, 12 at second, 10 at shortstop, six at first and even pitched an inning.

The Astros designated Kessinger for assignment on Dec. 23.

Nationals reach 1-year deal with INF Rosario

The Washington Nationals agreed to terms with infielder Amed Rosario on a one-year contract.

Financial terms were not disclosed, however MLB.com reported the deal is worth $2 million.

Washington also designated right-hander Joan Adon for assignment on Wednesday.

Rosario, 29, batted .280 with three home runs, 32 RBIs and 13 steals in 103 games between the Tampa Bay Rays, Los Angeles Dodgers and Cincinnati Reds in 2024.

A versatile defender, Rosario manned several different positions — including playing 27 games at second base, 26 in right field, 15 at third base and 14 at shortstop last season.

Rosario is a career .273 hitter with 63 homers, 366 RBIs and 449 runs scored for the New York Mets, (2017-20), Cleveland Guardians (2021-23), Dodgers (2023-24), Rays (2024) and Reds (2024).

Adon, 26, posted a 6.75 ERA without recording a decision in eight games (one start) last season.

Marlins LHP Garrett (elbow) to miss season

Miami Marlins left-hander Braxton Garrett underwent revision surgery on the ulnar collateral ligament in his throwing elbow and will miss the 2025 season, the Miami Herald reported.

Garrett, 27, had an internal brace inserted in December, per the report.

Garrett went 2-2 with a 5.35 ERA in seven starts for the Marlins last season before being placed on the injured list with a forearm flexor strain.

A first-round pick (No. 7 overall) of the Marlins in 2016, Garrett began the 2024 season on the IL with a left shoulder impingement and didn't make his season debut until May 12.

White Sox signing LHP Perez to 1-year deal

The Chicago White Sox and veteran left-hander Martin Perez are in agreement on a one-year deal worth $5 million, multiple outlets reported.

Perez, 33, went 5-6 with a 4.53 ERA in 26 starts with the Pittsburgh Pirates and San Diego Padres in 2024.

Perez, who made the American League All-Star team in 2022, is 90-87 with a 4.44 ERA in 314 career appearances (269 starts) with four teams, most notably the Texas Rangers (2012-18; 2022-23).

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

MEN'S TOP 25 ROUNDUP

Villanova holds on to topple No. 9 UConn

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Eric Dixon scored 18 of his 23 points in the second half to propel host Villanova (11-5, 4-1 Big East) to a 68-66 upset of No. 9 UConn (12-4, 4-1) on Wednesday night.

In a raucous atmosphere in Villanova's on-campus gym, Wooga Poplar added 18 points as the Wildcats snapped the Huskies' eight-game winning streak.

UConn had a chance to take the lead with 3.1 seconds left but Alex Karaban, who entered the game shooting 81.4 percent from the free throw line, missed two foul shots with the Huskies down by one.

In winning for the eighth time in its last nine games, Villanova weathered a UConn rally from 12 points down in the second half, which earned the Huskies a brief lead, 57-55, when Solo Ball hit a 3-pointer with 8:38 left.

But the Wildcats quickly regained the lead for good on layups by Dixon and Jordan Longino.

Villanova forward Eric Dixon (43) drives to shoot against Connecticut in the second half of Wednesday's game in Villanova, Pa. KYLE ROSS/IMAGN IMAGES

No. 5 Alabama 88, South Carolina 68

Mark Sears finished with 22 points and six assists to lead Alabama (13-2, 2-0 SEC) to a victory over host South Carolina (10-5, 0-2) in Columbia, S.C.

The Crimson Tide won their seventh in a row and 10th in a row against the Gamecocks, who dropped their second consecutive game.

Sears helped Alabama recover after a bit of a slow start and take the lead for good with 15:08 left in the first half on a Labaron Philon 3-pointer and free throw.

From that point on, the Crimson Tide used their size advantage at the rim to overpower the Gamecocks. Alabama outscored South Carolina 48-32 on points in the paint.

Alabama showed off its depth with 39 points coming from its bench. All of South Carolina's points came from its starters until the final minute, when its reserves scored four points.

No. 10 Texas A&M 80, No. 17 Oklahoma 78

Zhuric Phelps sank a go-ahead 3-pointer with 19.6 seconds left to cap a career-high 34-point outburst, leading Texas A&M (13-2, 2-0 SEC) to a comeback win over Oklahoma (13-2, 0-2) in Norman, Okla.

Texas A&M overcame an 18-point second-half deficit and a huge night from Oklahoma's Brycen Goodine, who scored a season-high 34 points and hit 9 of 11 3-point attempts.

Solomon Washington scored 11 points and Pharrel Payne added 10 points for the Aggies.

Texas A&M, playing without injured leading scorer Wade Taylor IV (15.7 ppg), still won its ninth consecutive game.

Jeremiah Fears scored 13 points and Jalon Moore chipped in 11 points for the Sooners, who absorbed their second loss in a row.

No. 11 Kansas 74, Arizona State 55

Zeke Mayo scored 23 points on 8-of-14 shooting to lead Kansas (11-3, 2-1 Big 12) to a win over Arizona State (10-4, 1-2) in Lawrence, Kan.

Hunter Dickinson added 15 points, 12 rebounds, three blocks and three steals for the Jayhawks, while Rylan Griffen added nine points on 4-of-9 shooting. Shakeel Moore chipped in eight points, all in the second half.

Dickinson put Kansas ahead 43-42 by finishing a three-point play with 16:08 remaining, dunking the ball with one hand as Arizona State's Jayden Quantaince fouled him in a last-ditch attempt to prevent the inevitable.

Moore capped an 11-0 start to the half with a fast-break bucket after a steal by KJ Adams that gave Kansas a 47-42 lead with 14:31 remaining, prompting an Arizona State timeout.

Arizona State went scoreless for the first seven-plus minutes of the second half, breaking the ice on a three-pointer by Adam Miller that cut Kansas' lead to 45-42.

No. 13 Illinois 91, Penn State 52

Senior forward Ben Humrichous scored 19 of his season-high 21 points in the first half to spark Illinois (12-3, 4- 1 Big Ten) to a victory over Penn State (12-4, 2-3) in Champaign, Ill.

The Fighting Illini prevailed despite the absence of leading scorer Kasparas Jakucionis. The freshman point guard, named to the Wooden Award Midseason Top 25 Watch list Tuesday, sat out due to an injured left forearm.

Tre White contributed 20 points and seven rebounds for the Illini. Freshman Morez Johnson Jr. added a career-high 20 points off the bench and pulled down 11 rebounds.

Nick Kern Jr. scored 13 points and Zach Hicks added 11 for the Nittany Lions, who set a season low for points and finished 35 points below their average. Junior center Yanic Konan Niederhauser blocked a career-high seven shots.

Penn State's Ace Baldwin Jr., who entered the night as the nation's No. 4 assist man with 8.4 per game, went scoreless with two assists and three turnovers before taking a seat for good with 4:42 left in the first half. He did not return due to a back injury sustained while taking a charge in the game's opening minute. Starting forward Puff Johnson (10.3 ppg) did not play.

No. 18 Gonzaga 93, San Diego 80

Five players scored in double figures and Gonzaga (13-4, 4-0 West Coast Conference) outgunned visiting San Diego (4-13, 1-3) in Spokane, Wash.

Ben Gregg pumped in a game-high 23 points for the Bulldogs, while Khalif Battle added 20.

Graham Ike made just 1 of 5 field goals but still finished with 15 points, going 13 of 15 at the foul line, and hauled in a game-high 19 rebounds.

Ryan Nembhard contributed his own double-double with 11 points and 11 assists, and Braden Huff came off the bench for 11 points.

Gonzaga canned 27 of 33 foul shots and dominated the glass 48-31 to win its fourth straight game.

Five players reached double digits for the Toreros, led by reserve Kjay Bradley with 21 points. Santiago Trouet scored 14, while Kody Clouet and Bendji Pierre added 13 points each. Tony Duckett chipped in 10.

Clouet made a 3-pointer with 16:37 left to pull San Diego within 52-44 but the Zags pulled away after that. They gradually increased the margin to 22 before the Toreros scored the final nine points to make the margin more respectable.

No. 23 Ole Miss 73, Arkansas 66

Malik Dia scored a season-high 21 points and drained a crucial 3-pointer with 1:10 remaining as Ole Miss (13-2, 2-0 SEC) topped Arkansas (11-4, 0-2) in Fayetteville, Ark.

With Arkansas rallying down 68-62, Dia – who had a team-high eight rebounds – took a pass from Jaylen Murray and canned a wide-open trey to lock down the win for the Rebels, who won for the seventh time in eight games.

Sean Pedulla had 16 points and made 3 for 4 from deep.

Dre Davis added 10 as Ole Miss made 23 of 50 shots (46 percent) from the floor and hit 9 of 23 (39.1 percent) from range.

Adou Thiero led the Razorbacks with 17 points and nine boards. Johnell Davis had 15 points, while Boogie Fland had 14 points, six rebounds and five assists. D.J. Wagner netted 11.

To open the only regular-season meeting, Arkansas raced out to a 10-1 start behind Fland's five points, a three-point play by Wagner and Thiero's steal and breakaway, holding the visitors without a basket until Murray's driving layup at 15:18.

WOMEN'S TOP 25 ROUNDUP

No. 4 USC hands No. 8 Maryland its 1st loss

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Kennedy Smith produced a personal 7-0 run to tie the game midway through the fourth quarter, and No. 4 Southern California rallied for a 79-74 win over No. 8 Maryland on Wednesday in College Park, Md.

The Terrapins led 68-61 before Smith sank two layups, then drilled a 3-pointer to level the game with 3:46 remaining. Maryland subsequently led 72-70, but USC pulled away with a 9-0 surge that featured a three-point play from Kiki Iriafen, who also hit two foul shots to cap the run.

Iriafen and JuJu Watkins each scored 21 points for the Trojans (15-1, 5-0 Big Ten), who have an 11-game winning streak. Smith scored 11 points, and teammates Kayleigh Heckel and Avery Howell each had 10 points off the bench.

Shyanne Sellers poured in 26 points, but it wasn't enough for Maryland (14-1, 4-1) to avoid its first loss of the season. Kaylene Smikle added 16 points, and Christina Dalce amassed 15 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots.

USC's JuJu Watkins (12) handles the ball against Maryland's Shyanne Sellers on Wednesday in College Park, Md. GREG FIUME/GETTY IMAGES

No. 7 UConn 81, Xavier 27

In their first game without injured guard Paige Bueckers (leg), the Huskies cruised to a victory over the Musketeers in Hartford, Conn.

Azzi Fudd put up 23 points, freshman Allie Ziebell scored a season-best 17 points and Sarah Strong finished with 15 points, seven rebounds and five steals for UConn (14-2, 5-0 Big East).

Irune Orio hit 4 of 5 shots from the floor and scored 10 points for Xavier (5-10, 0-4). The rest of the Musketeers shot 5 of 33 (15.2 percent).

No. 9 Ohio State 84, No. 25 Michigan 77

Jaloni Cambridge logged 29 points, six rebounds and four assists, powering the Buckeyes to a comeback win over the Wolverines in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Ohio State (15-0, 4-0 Big Ten) trailed by 13 points at halftime but made a big charge in the third quarter, during which Cambridge and Chance Gray each scored nine points. Gray wound up with 16 points, teammate Cotie McMahon had 13 and Ajae Petty scored 10.

Olivia Olson produced 20 points for Michigan (10-5, 1-3), which lost for the fourth time in five games. Syla Swords notched 14 points, and Greta Kampschroeder and Jordan Hobbs each had 13 points.

No. 11 TCU 80, Kansas 73

Sedona Prince amassed 30 points, 14 rebounds, four assists and three blocked shots as the Horned Frogs downed the Jayhawks in Lawrence, Kan.

Up by six at halftime, TCU (16-1, 4-0 Big 12) never trailed in the second half en route to its seventh win in a row. Kansas (11-4, 1-3) got within three points twice in the third quarter and once in the game's final seconds but never drew closer.

TCU's Hailey Van Lith finished with 19 points and six assists while Taylor Bigby scored 12 points. Kansas got 24 points from S'Mya Nichols, 19 points and six rebounds from Elle Evans, and 12 points from Laia Conesa.

No. 12 Kansas State 71, No. 22 Utah 47

Serena Sundell led a balanced Wildcats attack with 15 points as Kansas State defeated the Utes in Salt Lake City.

Ayoka Lee added 14 points and Temira Poindexter and Jaelyn Glenn each scored 11 as the Wildcats (16-1, 4-0 Big 12) registered their 11th consecutive victory.

Gianna Kneepkens scored 12 points and Reese Ross had 11 for Utah (12-3, 3-1).

No. 17 West Virginia 89, Texas Tech 53

JJ Quinerly, Jordan Harrison and Sydney Shaw combined for 60 points as the Mountaineers routed the Lady Raiders in Lubbock, Texas.

Quinerly put up 21 points, Harrison 20 and Shaw 19 as the trio combined to shoot 19-for-25 from the floor as West Virginia (13-2, 3-1 Big 12) won its third game in row. The only player to finish in double figures for Texas Tech (12-5, 1-3) was Bailey Maupin with 15 points.

Nebraska 85, No. 20 Michigan State 80

Senior center Alexis Markowski scored a career-high 28 points and grabbed eight rebounds while leading the Cornhuskers past the Spartans in Lincoln, Neb.

A 28-12 second-quarter explosion gave Nebraska (12-4, 3-2 Big Ten) a 10-point halftime lead. Michigan State (12-3, 2-2) never got closer than five points in the second half until the closing seconds. Julia Ayrault scored 21 points and Theryn Hallock contributed 18 for Michigan State.

NBA

WEDNESDAY'S ROUNDUP

Cavs take down Thunder in battle of best

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Jarrett Allen collected 25 points and 12 rebounds to lift the host Cleveland Cavaliers to a 129-122 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder on Wednesday in a battle of the top two teams in the NBA.

Evan Mobley contributed 21 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists for the Cavaliers, who have won 11 in a row overall and improved to 11-0 against Western Conference opponents. Oklahoma City was riding a franchise-record 15-game winning streak into this matchup.

Cleveland's Darius Garland scored 18 points and Max Strus sank five 3-pointers to highlight his 17-point performance off the bench. Ty Jerome had 15 points and Donovan Mitchell finished with 11 despite making just three of 16 shots from the floor for the Cavaliers.

Oklahoma City superstar Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 31 points and Jalen Williams added 25, plus nine assists.

Isaiah Hartenstein notched 18 points, 11 rebounds, and eight assists, and Cason Wallace scored 15 points for the Thunder.

Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo dunks during the first quarter against the San Antonio Spurs on Wednesday in Milwaukee. JEFF HANISCH/IMAGN IMAGES

Bucks 121, Spurs 105

Damian Lillard scored 26 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 25 points as Milwaukee beat visiting San Antonio.

Lillard also had eight assists, while Antetokounmpo added 16 rebounds and eight dimes for his 432nd career double-double, moving past Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for the top spot in Bucks history.

Brook Lopez posted 22 points for Milwaukee, which set up its clinical win with a commanding 34-19 second quarter.

Keldon Johnson combined 24 points with 11 boards in 25 minutes off the bench for San Antonio, while Chris Paul contributed 18 points and seven assists.

Victor Wembanyama had an unimpressive evening with 10 points on 4-of-10 shooting, though he added 10 rebounds and three blocked shots.

Pacers 129, Bulls 113

Pascal Siakam scored 26 points as Indiana beat Chicago in Indianapolis.

Thomas Bryant added 22 points and eight rebounds, while Tyrese Haliburton collected 16 points and 13 assists as the Pacers won their fourth straight game. Andrew Nembhard had 14 points, and Obi Toppin and Jarace Walker chipped in 12 apiece.

Zach LaVine led Chicago with 31 points, Coby White had 19, Jalen Smith scored 13 with seven rebounds and Nikola Vucevic had 10 points and seven boards.

Leading by 19 at halftime, Indiana grew its lead to 70-48 after Bryant accounted for the Pacers' first seven points of the third quarter. Siakam followed with a 3-pointer, and then baskets by Haliburton and Bennedict Mathurin extended Indiana's lead to 29.

The Pacers took their largest lead of the game after Toppin's back-to-back layups and Haliburton's basket gave Indiana an 87-54 advantage with 4:18 left in the third.

Trail Blazers 119, Pelicans 100

Deni Avdija scored 26 points to lead a balanced scoring effort and hot-shooting Portland routed host New Orleans.

Avdija made 10-of-15 field-goal attempts, including 4-of-7 on 3-pointers, and the Blazers shot 54.5 percent from the floor and 36.1 percent from beyond the arc.

Shaedon Sharpe added 21 points, Anfernee Simons scored 17, Toumani Camara had 15, Scoot Henderson scored 13 and Deandre Ayton had 11 points and 13 rebounds.

CJ McCollum scored 23 points, Dejounte Murray added 20 and Jordan Hawkins chipped in 10 for the Pelicans, who played without forward Zion Williamson due to night off as he regains his conditioning. Williamson returned from a 27-game absence due to a strained hamstring to score 22 points in a loss to Minnesota on Tuesday.

Sixers 109, Wizards 103

Tyrese Maxey scored 29 points, including the go-ahead basket with 24 seconds remaining, to elevate undermanned Philadelphia past visiting Washington.

Maxey's driving finger roll to break a 103-103 stalemate made up for the previous possession when the game's high scorer missed a contested fadeaway jumper. Maxey got his second chance when Philadelphia forced Kyle Kuzma to miss a long jump shot on the other end.

The Maxey basket was part of a game-ending 8-0 run for the 76ers, the other six points of which came at the free-throw line. Maxey hit two from the charity stripe to force the tie after Washington had pulled ahead in controversial fashion.

The Wizards, battling back from down as many as 16, took a 103-101 lead when Kuzma scored on a fastbreak layup.

Kuzma picked up his dribble, then began dribbling again before the score, but officials did not call the violation.

Knicks 112, Raptors 98

Karl-Anthony Towns and Josh Hart each posted double-doubles for host New York, which snapped a three-game losing streak by gradually pulling away from Toronto for a win.

Towns, who was listed as questionable after missing Monday's 103-94 loss to the Orlando Magic with a knee injury, finished with 27 points and 13 rebounds in his 31st double-double of the season. Hart had 21 points and 11 rebounds.

OG Anunoby, opposing the team with whom he spent the first six-plus seasons of his career, also had 27 points while Jalen Brunson (13 points, seven assists, six rebounds) and Mikal Bridges (10 points) also scored in double figures as the Knicks snapped their longest losing streak since a three-game skid March 29-April 2, 2024.

Immanuel Quickley scored 22 points while Scottie Barnes had 18 and RJ Barrett finished with 16 for the Raptors, who have lost 14 of 15. Quickley and Barrett were sent to Toronto in exchange for Anunoby on Dec. 30, 2023.

Pistons 113, Nets 98

Malik Beasley scored 23 points as Detroit moved over .500 and pushed their winning streak to five games by defeating depleted Brooklyn in New York.

The Pistons led most of the way in winning for the eighth time in nine games and improved to 19-18 by beating the Nets for the second time this season, both times decisively. Detroit also is on its first five-game winning streak since March 2-10, 2019.

After he made just 1 of 10 shots on Monday when the Pistons rallied for a three-point win over the visiting Portland Trail Blazers, Beasley made 9-of-17 shots on Wednesday. He sank four 3-pointers and scored 16 of his points in the opening half.

Simone Fontecchio added 11 of his 17 points after halftime as Detroit's reserves totaled 50 points.

Marcus Sasser contributed 15 on five 3-pointers as part of Detroit's strong bench showing. Cade Cunningham chipped in 13 points in 23 minutes.

Nuggets 126, Clippers 103

Jamal Murray had 21 points and nine assists, Russell Westbrook and Michael Porter Jr. scored 19 points each and host Denver beat Los Angeles.

Julian Strawther contributed 16 points, Christian Braun added 15 and DeAndre Jordan had a season-high 12 points along with nine rebounds for Denver. The Nuggets, who lost to the visiting Boston Celtics on Tuesday, are 8-0 in the second game of back-to-backs.

Both teams were without star players. Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard returned to Los Angeles earlier Wednesday to be with his family because of the wildfires. Denver center Nikola Jokic missed his second straight game due to illness.

Norman Powell scored a game-high 30 points, James Harden finished with 16 and Ivica Zubac and Kevin Porter Jr. added 10 each for the Clippers, who have lost four of their last five.

The teams split four games this season, with three of those played on the Nuggets' court.

WEDNESDAY'S BOX SCORES

Milwaukee 121, San Antonio 105

SAN ANTONIO (105)

Barnes 4-9 4-4 14, Castle 2-12 1-2 5, Wembanyama 4-10 0-0 10, Paul 6-10 1-1 18, Vassell 4-17 0-0 11, Champagnie 3-11 0-0 9, Johnson 7-15 8-9 24, Jones 1-2 1-1 3, Bassey 2-3 0-0 4, Mamukelashvili 2-5 2-3 7, Collins 0-1 0-0 0, Wesley 0-0 0-0 0, Branham 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 35-95 17-20 105.

MILWAUKEE (121)

Antetokounmpo 11-21 3-7 25, Prince 1-3 0-0 3, Lopez 8-17 1-1 22, Jackson Jr. 0-1 0-0 0, Lillard 8-13 6-6 26, Green 5-9 0-0 14, Trent Jr. 5-5 0-0 14, Middleton 2-7 3-4 8, Portis 2-12 1-2 5, Umude 0-0 0-0 0, Robbins 0-0 0-0 0, Rollins 1-2 0-0 2, Beauchamp 1-2 0-0 2. Totals 44-92 14-20 121.

SAS	27	19	32	27	–	105
MIL	31	34	26	30	–	121

3-Point Goals: San Antonio 18-52 (Paul 5-6, Vassell 3-9, Champagnie 3-9, Johnson 2-5, Wembanyama 2-6, Barnes 2-7, Mamukelashvili 1-3, Collins 0-1, Jones 0-1, Castle 0-5), Milwaukee 19-42 (Lopez 5-11, Trent Jr. 4-4, Lillard 4-7, Green 4-7, Prince 1-3, Middleton 1-5, Antetokounmpo 0-1, Rollins 0-1, Portis 0-3). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: San Antonio 46 (Johnson 11), Milwaukee 57 (Antetokounmpo 16). Assists: San Antonio 24 (Paul 7), Milwaukee 26 (Antetokounmpo, Lillard 8). Total Fouls: San Antonio 14, Milwaukee 16. A: 17,341 (17,500)

Philadelphia 109, Washington 103

WASHINGTON (103)

George 1-6 0-0 3, Kuzma 7-19 0-0 16, Valanciunas 6-13 1-1 14, Carrington 4-10 0-0 8, Coulibaly 2-8 0-2 5, Kispert 8-14 3-3 23, Holmes 1-2 1-1 3, Butler 11-19 1-2 26, Champagnie 2-3 0-0 5. Totals 42-94 6-9 103.

PHILADELPHIA (109)

Martin 4-7 0-0 8, Oubre Jr. 7-15 0-0 15, Yabusele 6-11 4-4 21, Gordon 5-8 1-3 15, Maxey 11-27 4-6 29, Council IV 3-7 1-1 8, Bona 0-1 2-2 2, Edwards 1-4 0-0 2, Dowtin 1-3 1-2 3, Jackson 2-6 1-1 6. Totals 40-89 14-19 109.

WAS	25	23	26	29	–	103
PHI	32	27	29	21	–	109

3-Point Goals: Washington 13-30 (Kispert 4-8, Butler 3-3, Kuzma 2-8, Valanciunas 1-1, Champagnie 1-1, Coulibaly 1-1, George 1-4, Carrington 0-4), Philadelphia 15-44 (Yabusele 5-7, Gordon 4-7, Maxey 3-14, Council IV 1-3, Jackson 1-4, Oubre Jr. 1-6, Martin 0-1, Edwards 0-2). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Washington 52 (Valanciunas 14), Philadelphia 36 (Yabusele 8). Assists: Washington 26 (Butler 7), Philadelphia 21 (Maxey 6). Total Fouls: Washington 18, Philadelphia 14. A: 19,762 (20,318)

Denver 126, L.A. Clippers 103

L.A. CLIPPERS (103)

Jones Jr. 2-3 0-0 4, Powell 8-17 10-13 30, Zubac 2-4 6-7 10, Dunn 0-1 0-0 0, Harden 5-15 4-5 16, Coffey 2-11 2-2 6, Bamba 1-5 2-2 4, Miller 1-5 4-4 6, Porter Jr. 4-7 1-4 10, Mann 1-4 0-0 3, Brown 2-2 1-1 6, Batum 1-2 0-0 3, Hyland 1-4 2-2 5. Totals 30-80 32-40 103.

DENVER (126)

Braun 6-8 1-1 15, Porter Jr. 8-12 0-0 19, Jordan 5-6 2-3 12, Murray 7-13 3-3 21, Westbrook 8-16 2-5 19, Strawther 5-10 2-2 16, Watson 4-10 1-3 9, Saric 3-8 0-0 7, Tyson 0-1 0-0 0, Pickett 2-2 0-0 6, Nnaji 1-1 0-0 2, Alexander 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 49-89 11-17 126.

LAC	19	31	27	26	–	103
DEN	33	33	32	28	–	126

3-Point Goals: L.A. Clippers 11-38 (Powell 4-10, Harden 2-8, Brown 1-1, Batum 1-2, Mann 1-2, Porter Jr. 1-4, Hyland 1-4, Dunn 0-1, Jones Jr. 0-1, Bamba 0-2, Coffey 0-3), Denver 17-35 (Murray 4-6, Strawther 4-8, Porter Jr. 3-5, Pickett 2-2, Braun 2-2, Saric 1-4, Westbrook 1-5, Alexander 0-1, Watson 0-2). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: L.A. Clippers 40 (Bamba, Zubac 8), Denver 45 (Jordan 9). Assists: L.A. Clippers 14 (Harden 4), Denver 29 (Murray 9). Total Fouls: L.A. Clippers 15, Denver 24. A: 19,711 (19,155)

Detroit 113, Brooklyn 98

DETROIT (113)

Hardaway Jr. 2-6 4-4 10, Harris 4-9 0-0 9, Duren 3-5 2-4 8, Beasley 9-17 1-1 23, Cunningham 6-10 1-2 13, Holland II 4-7 0-1 8, Fontecchio 7-11 0-0 17, Sasser 5-9 0-0 15, Stewart 3-5 0-0 6, Reed 1-2 0-0 2, Moore Jr. 1-3 0-0 2, Klintman 0-0 0-0 0, Jenkins 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 45-86 8-12 113.

BROOKLYN (98)

Clowney 9-20 6-6 29, Williams 4-13 2-2 11, Claxton 6-11 2-2 14, Johnson 3-10 2-2 10, Martin 4-12 0-2 12, Wilson 2-7 2-2 7, Evbuomwan 4-7 5-5 13, Beekman 1-6 0-0 2. Totals 33-86 19-21 98.

DET	27	32	32	22	–	113
BKN	25	24	21	28	–	98

3-Point Goals: Detroit 15-37 (Sasser 5-7, Beasley 4-11, Fontecchio 3-5, Hardaway Jr. 2-4, Harris 1-3, Jenkins 0-2, Holland II 0-2, Cunningham 0-3), Brooklyn 13-39 (Clowney 5-11, Martin 4-9, Johnson 2-4, Wilson 1-6, Williams 1-7, Claxton 0-1, Evbuomwan 0-1). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Detroit 42 (Duren 9), Brooklyn 38 (Martin 10). Assists: Detroit 30 (Beasley, Cunningham, Harris 5), Brooklyn 24 (Beekman 5). Total Fouls: Detroit 20, Brooklyn 15. A: 16,098 (17,732)

Indiana 129, Chicago 113

CHICAGO (113)

LaVine 12-20 5-6 31, Williams 0-6 2-4 2, Vucevic 5-9 0-0 10, Giddey 4-7 0-0 9, White 8-17 0-1 19, Ball 2-6 0-0 5, Smith 4-4 3-3 13, Phillips 2-4 1-2 6, Duarte 2-5 0-0 5, Buzelis 1-2 0-0 2, Horton-Tucker 3-4 1-1 8, Terry 1-3 0-0 2, Carter 0-0 1-2 1. Totals 44-87 13-19 113.

INDIANA (129)

Mathurin 3-12 2-2 8, Siakam 11-17 1-3 26, Bryant 9-16 2-2 22, Haliburton 7-13 0-0 16, Nembhard 5-11 4-5 14, Toppin 5-10 1-2 12, Sheppard 3-5 0-0 7, Walker 5-7 1-3 12, McConnell 2-7 2-3 6, Freeman 2-3 2-4 6, Jackson 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 52-101 15-24 129.

CHI	18	26	32	37	–	113
IND	29	34	37	29	–	129

3-Point Goals: Chicago 12-35 (White 3-10, Smith 2-2, LaVine 2-6, Horton-Tucker 1-1, Duarte 1-2, Giddey 1-2, Phillips 1-2, Ball 1-5, Terry 0-1, Buzelis 0-1, Williams 0-3), Indiana 10-29 (Siakam 3-7, Haliburton 2-3, Bryant 2-4, Sheppard 1-2, Walker 1-2, Toppin 1-4, Nembhard 0-3, Mathurin 0-4). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Chicago 40 (Smith, Vucevic 7), Indiana 46 (Bryant 8). Assists: Chicago 23 (Giddey, White 5), Indiana 37 (Haliburton 13). Total Fouls: Chicago 24, Indiana 19. A: 16,758 (18,165)

New York 112, Toronto 98

TORONTO (98)

Barnes 7-15 2-2 18, Barrett 7-15 1-2 16, Poeltl 4-6 0-0 8, Dick 1-6 0-0 3, Quickley 7-12 5-6 22, Walter 0-5 0-0 0, Brown 2-5 0-0 4, Olynyk 3-4 1-1 7, Shead 1-3 1-2 4, Agbaji 2-2 0-0 4, Temple 0-0 2-2 2, Boucher 4-4 0-0 10. Totals 38-77 12-15 98.

NEW YORK (112)

Anunoby 8-13 7-8 27, Hart 9-14 1-2 21, Towns 9-14 6-6 27, Bridges 4-18 0-0 10, Brunson 5-13 2-4 13, Shamet 4-8 0-0 8, Achiuwa 3-5 0-0 6, Payne 0-1 0-0 0, Sims 0-0 0-0 0, Ryan 0-0 0-0 0, Toppin 0-2 0-0 0, Kolek 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 42-88 16-20 112.

TOR	24	27	25	22	–	98
NYK	28	27	31	26	–	112

3-Point Goals: Toronto 10-26 (Quickley 3-6, Boucher 2-2, Barnes 2-3, Shead 1-2, Barrett 1-4, Dick 1-4, Olynyk 0-1, Brown 0-1, Walter 0-3), New York 12-33 (Anunoby 4-6, Towns 3-3, Hart 2-5, Bridges 2-11, Brunson 1-4, Achiuwa 0-1, Shamet 0-3). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Toronto 33 (Poeltl 10), New York 43 (Towns 13). Assists: Toronto 25 (Barnes, Quickley 5), New York 24 (Brunson, Hart 7). Total Fouls: Toronto 15, New York 15. A: 19,812 (19,763)

Cleveland 129, Oklahoma City 122

OKLAHOMA CITY (122)

Dort 2-6 2-2 7, Williams 9-17 5-7 25, Hartenstein 8-14 2-2 18, Gilgeous-Alexander 13-27 4-4 31, Wallace 6-8 0-0 15, Joe 2-6 2-2 8, Wiggins 5-7 0-0 11, Williams 2-4 0-0 4, Williams 1-1 0-0 3. Totals 48-90 15-17 122.

CLEVELAND (129)

Mobley 8-13 5-7 21, Wade 4-5 0-0 11, Allen 9-11 7-10 25, Garland 7-15 2-2 18, Mitchell 3-16 3-4 11, Strus 6-7 0-0 17, LeVert 3-9 0-0 8, Niang 1-5 0-0 3, Okoro 0-2 0-0 0, Jerome 6-7 3-4 15. Totals 47-90 20-27 129.

OKC	32	27	43	20	–	122
CLE	25	37	41	26	–	129

3-Point Goals: Oklahoma City 11-31 (Wallace 3-3, Joe 2-6, Williams 2-7, Williams 1-1, Wiggins 1-2, Dort 1-3, Gilgeous-Alexander 1-6, Hartenstein 0-1, Williams 0-2), Cleveland 15-36 (Strus 5-6, Wade 3-4, LeVert 2-5, Garland 2-6, Mitchell 2-7, Niang 1-3, Okoro 0-2, Mobley 0-3). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Oklahoma City 38 (Hartenstein 11), Cleveland 41 (Allen 12). Assists: Oklahoma City 35 (Williams 9), Cleveland 36 (Garland, Mobley 7). Total Fouls: Oklahoma City 24, Cleveland 20. A: 19,432 (20,562)

Portland 119, New Orleans 100

PORTLAND (119)

Avdija 10-15 2-4 26, Camara 4-8 6-6 15, Ayton 5-8 1-2 11, Sharpe 8-13 1-1 21, Simons 7-11 0-0 17, Henderson 6-15 0-0 13, Murray 3-6 0-0 6, Williams 2-3 0-0 4, Banton 2-6 0-0 4, Walker 0-0 0-0 0, Rupert 0-1 0-0 0, Reath 1-2 0-0 2. Totals 48-88 10-13 119.

NEW ORLEANS (100)

Jones 0-3 0-0 0, Robinson-Earl 1-1 0-0 2, Missi 1-2 0-0 2, McCollum 10-17 0-0 23, Murray 8-14 2-2 20, Green 3-7 1-1 9, Hawkins 4-16 0-0 10, Boston Jr. 3-12 0-2 6, Alvarado 3-8 2-3 9, Theis 2-3 2-2 6, Reeves 3-4 1-1 9, Matkovic 2-3 0-0 4. Totals 40-90 8-11 100.

POR	40	35	23	21	–	119
NOP	24	18	34	24	–	100

3-Point Goals: Portland 13-36 (Avdija 4-7, Sharpe 4-7, Simons 3-7, Camara 1-4, Henderson 1-5, Banton 0-3, Murray 0-3), New Orleans 12-37 (McCollum 3-7, Reeves 2-3, Green 2-5, Murray 2-5, Hawkins 2-9, Alvarado 1-2, Jones 0-1, Matkovic 0-1, Boston Jr. 0-4). Fouled Out: None. Rebounds: Portland 44 (Ayton 13), New Orleans 41 (Green, Missi 7). Assists: Portland 24 (Camara, Henderson, Simons 5), New Orleans 19 (Murray 5). Total Fouls: Portland 14, New Orleans 15. A: 16,425 (16,867)

GOLF THIS WEEK

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PGA TOUR

Tour finishes Hawaiian swing

It's another week in paradise for the PGA Tour, as the second leg of its Hawaii double tees off Thursday at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu. The Sony Open hosts a field of 144 players, with many being the circuit's rank-and-file with just a few big names sprinkled in.

Sentry winner and 2022 Sony champion Hideki Matsuyama is, understandably, the heavy betting favorite, followed by Corey Conners, and Tom Kim and Russell Henley. The Japanese star is just the seventh player to win both Hawaii events.

Sunday's victor will go home with $1.566 million of the $8.7 million purse, plus 500 FedEx Cup points.

Who to watch

Russell Henley: It's Russell Henley season, folks. Henley played well at The Sentry last week, coming in at 17 under. Of course, the winner's score was 35, so his T-30 finish might not look great on paper. However, he was fourth in driving accuracy and 17th in Strokes Gained: Approach, two of the most important stats at Waialae. As for course history, Henley won this event in 2013, finished second to Matsuyama in 2022 and T-4 last season.

Keegan Bradley: If you thought Bradley's new mustache wouldn't help his chances of making his way onto our card for the Sony, you're wrong. Jokes aside, this is a great spot for the U.S. Ryder Cup captain. He's fresh off a T-15 finish at The Sentry and has performed well at Waialae over the last several years. He lost in a playoff last year, and grabbed a share of 12th in 2022 and 2020.

Cam Davis: He received a two-stroke penalty at The Sentry last week for playing the wrong golf ball, but he still finished at 22 under and tied for 13th. The Aussie missed the cut in his first appearance at the Sony in 2019, but has since rattled off five straight finishes of T-32 or better, including a tie for ninth in 2020.

Taylor Montgomery: This is a longshot play, so be responsible and only sprinkle. Montgomery has teed it up in the Sony twice during his young career, finishing T-12 in both 2024 and 2023. His last Tour start came at the RSM Classic where he tied for 42nd.

— Riley Hamel

LPGA TOUR

Tour putting search committee together

The LPGA has formed the search committee that will work to hire the tour's 10th commissioner. The tour released the information, which was obtained by Golfweek, to players in late December.

Mollie Marcoux Samaan's last official day with the LPGA is Jan. 9. Her tenure of 3 ½ years is among the shortest stints for LPGA commissioners dating to 1975. Liz Moore, the LPGA's Chief Legal and Technology Officer and Corporate Secretary, will assume the role of Interim Commissioner.

The eight-person committee is made up entirely of current board members, with player directors Ashleigh Buhai, Stephanie Meadow and Stacy Lewis making up the current players on the committee. Lewis, a two-time major winner and former No. 1 who might have an interest in the job of commissioner sometime down the road, is currently part of the LET Joint Venture Board.

LPGA Player President Vicki Goetze-Ackerman, who was also on the search committee that hired Marcoux Samaan, is on it once more.

Louise Ball, who was recently elected to a three-year term as president of the LPGA Professionals division, joins three independent board directors serving on the committee. Those people include Michele Meyer-Shipp, Madi Kleiner and Board Chairman John Veihmeyer, who was also on the previous search committee that hired Marcoux Samaan, while serving as board chairman.

Veihmeyer, a retired global chairman of KPMG, also serves on the board of Ford Motor Company and is chair of Notre Dame's Board of Trustees.

The tour, which celebrates 75 years this season, will next hire an executive search firm to help find its newest leader.

— Beth Ann Nichols

COLLEGE

PGA Tour U's new benefits

New year, new PGA Tour University benefits. Since the program's inception, PGA Tour U has constantly updated its criteria to provide the top amateurs with a direct pathway to the PGA Tour, and on Thursday the PGA Tour again announced changes to the program that provide more points through the Accelerated pathway as well as more Korn Ferry Tour access each year.

Starting in 2025, Accelerated will now offer more points for the following:

- **Lifetime 26 weeks as No. 1 in WAGR:** 1 point
- **Lifetime 52 weeks as No. 1 in WAGR :** 1 point
- **Top-5 in an official PGA Tour event or select DP World Tour events:** 1 point
- **Top-10 and ties at Division I NCAA Championship:** 1 point
- **Jones Cup winner:** 1 point
- **Northeast Amateur winner:** 1 point
- **Southern Amateur winner:** 1 point
- **African Amateur winner:** 1 point (previously 2 points)
- **Asia-Pacific Amateur winner:** 1 point (previously 2 points)
- **D-I NCAA individual champion:** 2 points (previously 3 points)
- **European Amateur winner:** 1 point (previously 2 points)
- **Latin America Amateur winner:** 1 point (previously 2 points)
- **The Amateur winner:** 2 points (previously 3 points)
- **U.S. Amateur winner:** 2 points (previously 3 points)
- **Western Amateur winner:** 1 point (previously 2 points)

Previously, players weren't awarded points for weeks spent at No. 1, only points for their highest WAGR ranking. Additionally, a top-5 finish in a PGA Tour event will award an additional point on top of a top-10 finish. Accelerated points will not be awarded retroactively, meaning Florida State junior Luke Clanton and Auburn sophomore Jackson Koivun will remain at 17 points. Players need to reach 20 to earn a PGA Tour card. Gordon Sargent is the lone player to earn a card via Accelerated.

Clanton, for example, would be at 20 points simply based on his three top-five finishes in PGA Tour events in 2024 if points were awarded retroactively. However, he has virtually locked up the Ben Hogan Award, given to the player who was most outstanding in college, amateur and pro events over a year, and winning the Hogan awards three points.

Additionally, the top 10 seniors in the PGA Tour U rankings after the national championship will earn fully exempt status on the Korn Ferry Tour. Previously, only the top five earned full status while Nos. 6-10 were conditional members. The top five players in combined points earned between the PGA Tour and Korn Ferry Tour their first season after graduation will also keep their KFT status, up from three.

— Cameron Jourdan

PGA TOUR SONY OPEN

Matsuyama seeking a Hawaii sweep

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

Hideki Matsuyama celebrates with the trophy after winning The Sentry at Plantation Course at Kapalua on Sunday in Hawaii. KYLE TERADA/IMAGN IMAGES

Hideki Matsuyama opened the PGA Tour season in record-breaking style last weekend at the Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii.

The Japanese star will ride a wave of birdies to Honolulu this week as he tries to make it a two-week sweep at the Sony Open in Hawaii, beginning Thursday at Waialae Country Club.

Matsuyama won The Sentry on Sunday with a 35-under-par 257, the lowest 72-hole score in relation to par in PGA Tour history. He became the seventh player to win both of the tour's Hawaii events, having previously captured the Sony Open in 2022.

"I'm very happy. I wanted to definitely win both tournaments in Hawaii," Matsuyama said through a translator. "So, I'm very happy to be able to do that."

He will be the man to beat this week thanks to his current form, his past success at Waialae and the fact that he is the only top-10 player in the field.

The week got off to a somber start, though, as the tournament will be played without its 2024 champion, the late Grayson Murray.

Four months after Murray won his second PGA Tour title at the Sony Open, he died by suicide at age 30. The tour and Murray's family organized a celebration of life ceremony for him earlier this week at the site of his final victory.

Murray defeated Keegan Bradley and South Korean Byeong Hun An in a playoff last year by draining a 38-foot birdie putt.

"Weird feeling (during a practice round) playing the 18th hole for me. Last time I was there, I was there with Grayson," Bradley said. "Really sad. Really a horrible thing. Hopefully we can honor him, his legacy here for a long time."

Matsuyama is one of six PGA Tour winners in the field this week, including Si Woo Kim of South Korea (ranked No. 65 in the world) and Russell Henley (No. 17).

The Sony Open will feature mostly a mix of youngsters, newcomers and some veterans making their first starts of the season after The Sentry had a limited field of 59 players.

Gary Woodland, for example, hasn't won a tournament since the 2019 U.S. Open and is entering his last year of exemption on tour. His 2024 season was focused on working his way back from surgery to remove a brain lesion.

"I'm as optimistic about my golf game as I've been since I won the U.S. Open in 2019," Woodland said Wednesday. "One, I'm starting to feel better. Two, I understand what I need to do, slowing my brain down, slowing my heart rate down."

Twenty-five PGA Tour rookies are making their first starts. Joining them on a sponsor's exemption is World No. 1 amateur Luke Clanton, a 21-year-old Florida State golfer who notched four top-10 finishes on tour in 2024. If Clanton places in the top five this week, he will have earned enough points for an automatic tour card via the PGA Tour University pathway.

SCOREBOARD

BETTING LINE

NFL

Saturday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
LA Chargers	3	42.5	HOUSTON
BALTIMORE	10	43.5	Pittsburgh

Sunday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
BUFFALO	8.5	47	Denver
PHILADELPHIA	4.5	45.5	Green Bay
TAMPA BAY	3	50.5	Washington

Monday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
Minnesota	1.5	47	LA RAMS

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Thursday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
Notre Dame	2.5	45.5	PENN STATE

Friday

FAVORITE	LINE	O/U	UNDERDOG
Ohio State	6	53.5	TEXAS

All times Eastern

NFL

Playoffs

Saturday's Games

L.A. Chargers at Houston, 4:30 p.m., CBS
Pittsburgh at Baltimore, 8 p.m., Amazon

Sunday, Jan. 12

Denver at Buffalo, 1 p.m., CBS
Green Bay at Philadelphia, 4:30 p.m., Fox
Washington at Tampa Bay, 8 p.m., NBC

Monday, Jan. 13

Minnesota at L.A. Rams, 8 p.m., ESPN/ABC

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	27	10	.730	–
N.Y. Knicks	25	13	.658	2½
Philadelphia	15	20	.429	11
Brooklyn	13	24	.351	14
Toronto	8	29	.216	19

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	22	16	.579	–
Miami	18	17	.514	2½
Atlanta	19	18	.514	2½
Charlotte	8	27	.229	12½
Washington	6	29	.171	14½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	32	4	.889	–
Milwaukee	19	16	.543	12½
Indiana	20	18	.526	13
Detroit	19	18	.514	13½
Chicago	17	20	.459	15½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	24	12	.667	–
Memphis	24	13	.649	½
Dallas	21	16	.568	3½
San Antonio	18	19	.486	6½
New Orleans	7	31	.184	18

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Oklahoma City	30	6	.833	–
Denver	21	15	.583	9
Minnesota	19	17	.528	11
Portland	13	23	.361	17
Utah	9	26	.257	20½

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	20	16	.556	–
L.A. Clippers	20	17	.541	½
Golden State	18	18	.500	2
Sacramento	18	19	.486	2½
Phoenix	16	19	.457	3½

Tuesday's Scores

Charlotte 115, Phoenix 104
Houston 135, Washington 112
Dallas 118, L.A. Lakers 97
Minnesota 104, New Orleans 97
Atlanta 124, Utah 121
Boston 118, Denver 106
Miami 114, Golden State 98

Wednesday's Scores

Cleveland 129, Oklahoma City 122
Indiana 129, Chicago 113
Philadelphia 109, Washington 103
Detroit 113, Brooklyn 98
N.Y. Knicks 112, Toronto 98
Portland 119, New Orleans 100
Denver 126, L.A. Clippers 103
Milwaukee 121, San Antonio 105

Thursday's Games

Toronto at Cleveland, 7 p.m.
Golden State at Detroit, 7 p.m.
Minnesota at Orlando, 7 p.m.
Houston at Memphis, 8 p.m.
Portland at Dallas, 8:30 p.m.
Miami at Utah, 9 p.m.
Atlanta at Phoenix, 9 p.m.
Charlotte at L.A. Lakers, 10:30 p.m.

Friday's Games

Golden State at Indiana, 7 p.m.
Milwaukee at Orlando, 7 p.m.
New Orleans at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Sacramento at Boston, 7:30 p.m.
Oklahoma City at N.Y. Knicks, 7:30 p.m.
Washington at Chicago, 8 p.m.
Brooklyn at Denver, 9 p.m.

League Leaders

Scoring Averages

	GP	PTS	AVG
Antetokounmpo, MIL	28	884	31.6
Jokic, DEN	31	977	31.5
Gilgeous-Alexander, OKC	35	1095	31.3
Tatum, BOS	34	957	28.2
Durant, PHX	25	684	27.4
Fox, SAC	35	933	26.7
Davis, LAL	34	878	25.8
Edwards, MIN	36	929	25.8
Wembanyama, SAS	31	794	25.6
Maxey, PHI	28	711	25.4
Brunson, NYK	36	912	25.3
Towns, NYK	34	859	25.3
Lillard, MIL	27	668	24.7
Booker, PHX	30	737	24.6
Cunningham, DET	32	780	24.4
Irving, DAL	30	729	24.3

Rebounds Per Game

	GP	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Towns, NYK	34	102	375	477	14.0
Sabonis, SAC	34	130	339	469	13.8
Jokic, DEN	31	108	296	404	13.0
Zubac, LAC	36	139	317	456	12.7
Davis, LAL	34	89	314	403	11.9
Antetokounmpo, MIL	28	56	270	326	11.6
Kessler, UTA	29	123	203	326	11.2
Wembanyama, SAS	31	56	279	335	10.8
Gobert, MIN	36	124	259	383	10.6
Poeltl, TOR	31	115	213	328	10.6
Sengun, HOU	36	121	255	376	10.4
Johnson, ATL	32	59	266	325	10.2
Ayton, POR	26	73	191	264	10.2
Vucevic, CHI	35	79	276	355	10.1
Allen, CLE	35	84	269	353	10.1

Assists Per Game

	GP	AST	AVG
Young, ATL	35	427	12.2
Jokic, DEN	31	301	9.7
Cunningham, DET	32	303	9.5
James, LAL	33	292	8.9
Haliburton, IND	37	325	8.8
Paul, SAS	36	301	8.4
Harden, LAC	34	271	8.0
Brunson, NYK	36	273	7.6
Lillard, MIL	27	198	7.3
Simmons, BKN	26	179	6.9
Booker, PHX	30	204	6.8
Giddey, CHI	32	216	6.8
Garland, CLE	34	226	6.7
Westbrook, DEN	35	232	6.6
Sabonis, SAC	34	214	6.3

Steals Per Game

	GP	STL	AVG
Daniels, ATL	33	103	3.12
Maxey, PHI	28	58	2.07
Gilgeous-Alexander, OKC	35	68	1.94
George, PHI	24	44	1.83
Wallace, OKC	34	61	1.79
Williams, OKC	35	62	1.77
Westbrook, DEN	35	60	1.71
Jokic, DEN	31	53	1.71
Caldwell-Pope, ORL	37	61	1.65
Poole, WAS	28	46	1.64
Fox, SAC	35	57	1.63
Murray, DEN	29	47	1.62
Dunn, LAC	36	58	1.61
VanVleet, HOU	34	53	1.56

NHL

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Toronto	27	13	2	56	132	115
Florida	24	15	2	50	136	127
Boston	20	18	5	45	111	135
Tampa Bay	21	15	2	44	140	107
Ottawa	19	17	3	41	114	114
Montreal	19	18	3	41	122	136
Detroit	18	18	4	40	110	128
Buffalo	15	21	5	35	126	140

Metropolitan Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	27	10	4	58	150	109
New Jersey	25	15	3	53	137	109
Carolina	24	15	2	50	137	117
Columbus	18	17	6	42	141	148
Pittsburgh	17	17	8	42	128	156
Philadelphia	17	19	5	39	125	147
N.Y. Rangers	18	20	2	38	117	128
N.Y. Islanders	15	18	7	37	108	128

Western Conference

Central Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Winnipeg	28	12	2	58	152	106
Minnesota	26	11	4	56	127	111
Dallas	25	13	1	51	128	99
Colorado	25	16	1	51	141	134
St. Louis	19	19	4	42	118	129
Utah	17	15	7	41	113	118
Nashville	13	21	7	33	100	128
Chicago	14	25	2	30	105	138

Pacific Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vegas	28	9	3	59	143	107
Edmonton	25	12	3	53	132	109
L.A. Kings	23	10	5	51	118	96
Vancouver	18	12	10	46	121	128
Calgary	19	14	7	45	108	122
Anaheim	17	18	5	39	103	121
Seattle	17	21	3	37	118	130
San Jose	13	24	6	32	112	153

NOTE: Two points for a win, one for OT loss.

Tuesday's Scores

Edmonton 4, Boston 0
Detroit 3, Ottawa 2, OT
Dallas 5, N.Y. Rangers 4, OT
Columbus 4, Pittsburgh 3, SO
Tampa Bay 3, Carolina 2
Toronto 3, Philadelphia 2
Minnesota 6, St. Louis 4
Winnipeg 5, Nashville 2
Calgary 3, Anaheim 2, OT
Vegas 4, San Jose 2

Wednesday's Scores

Washington 2, Vancouver 1, OT
Chicago 3, Colorado 1
Florida 4, Utah 1
Calgary at L.A. Kings, ppd.

Thursday's Games

Buffalo at Ottawa, 7 p.m.
Boston at Tampa Bay, 7 p.m.
New Jersey at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m.
Dallas at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.
Edmonton at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Seattle at Columbus, 7 p.m.
Toronto at Carolina, 7:30 p.m.
Anaheim at St. Louis, 8 p.m.
Colorado at Minnesota, 8 p.m.
N.Y. Islanders at Vegas, 10 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 10

Chicago at Detroit, 7 p.m.
Montreal at Washington, 7 p.m.
Vancouver at Carolina, 7 p.m.
L.A. Kings at Winnipeg, 8 p.m.
San Jose at Utah, 9 p.m.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

College Football Playoff Matchups

Semifinals

Thursday

Capital One Orange Bowl
Notre Dame vs Penn State at Miami Gardens, 7:30 p.m.

Friday

Goodyear Cotton Bowl Classic
Ohio State vs Texas at Arlington, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 20

CFP National Championship
at Atlanta, 7:30 p.m.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Wednesday's Men's Scores

East

Holy Cross 70, Navy 59
Army West Point 74, Loyola Maryland 72
App State 74, Coastal Carolina 51
Loyola Chicago 79, La Salle 68
Seton Hall 85, DePaul 80
Villanova 68, UConn 66
Boston University 60, American University 54
Cleveland State 80, Robert Morris 69
North Carolina State 66, Notre Dame 65
Duquesne 85, Saint Joseph's 81
George Mason 64, Richmond 58
Massachusetts 76, Dayton 72
George Washington 75, Rhode Island 67
VCU 73, Fordham 61
Florida Atlantic 75, Charlotte 64
East Carolina 80, Temple 79
Longwood 85, UNC Asheville 76
Gardner-Webb 89, Winthrop 83
Colgate 67, Lehigh 62
Bucknell 65, Lafayette 62
Providence 84, Butler 65

Southeast

Furman 67, Citadel 63
East Tennessee State 70, Mercer 68
Wofford 77, Western Carolina 69
Florida State 80, Miami (FL) 65
Ole Miss 73, Arkansas 66
Alabama 88, South Carolina 68
UCF 75, Colorado 74
USC Upstate 77, Presbyterian 67
High Point 93, Charleston Southern 79
Belmont 90, Southern Illinois 86
Georgia State 82, Georgia Southern 78

Midwest

Youngstown State 72, Northern Kentucky 61
Purdue Fort Wayne 78, Milwaukee 73
Indiana 82, USC 69
Drake 64, Bradley 57
Murray State 71, UNI 68
Saint Louis 73, St. Bonaventure 68
Evansville 69, Illinois State 51
Valparaiso 98, Indiana State 95
Omaha 77, Kansas City 58
St. Thomas (MN) 73, South Dakota St. 72
Illinois 91, Penn State 52
Kansas 74, Arizona State 55

West

Gonzaga 93, San Diego 80
Texas A&M 80, Oklahoma 78
North Texas 81, Rice 59
Stanford 70, Virginia Tech 59
San Diego State 67, Air Force 38
California 75, Virginia 61

USA TODAY Sports Coaches Poll

Jan. 6

The USA TODAY Sports Men's Basketball Coaches Poll is conducted weekly throughout the regular season using a panel of head coaches at Division I schools. The panel is chosen in consultation with the National Association of Basketball Coaches. The voters represent each of the 32 Division I conferences that receive an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament. Each coach submits a Top 25 with a first-place vote worth 25 points, second place 24, and so on down to one point for 25th, with first-place votes in parenthesis.

	Record	Pts	Prv.
1. Tennessee (21)	14-0	765	1
2. Auburn (10)	13-1	749	2
3. Iowa State	12-1	711	3
4. Duke	12-2	670	4
5. Alabama	12-2	651	6
6. Marquette	13-2	581	8
7. Kentucky	12-2	560	11
8. Florida	13-1	529	5
9. Texas A&M	12-2	488	12
10. UConn	12-3	461	13
11. Houston	10-3	454	14
12. Kansas	10-3	438	7
13. Mississippi St.	13-1	372	16
14. Michigan St.	12-2	350	15
15. Illinois	11-3	300	20
16. Oklahoma	13-1	287	10
17. Oregon	13-2	284	9
18. Gonzaga	12-4	246	19
19. Purdue	11-4	228	22
20. Memphis	12-3	192	25
21. UCLA	11-3	147	18
22. Ole Miss	12-2	119	23
23. West Virginia	11-2	110	NR
24. Michigan	11-3	98	NR
25. Utah State	14-1	73	NR

Others receiving votes: Baylor 49; Cincinnati 38; Pittsburgh 32; San Diego State 25; St. John's 24; Clemson 10; Maryland 9; Georgia 5; Nebraska 4; Arizona 4; Wisconsin 3; Vanderbilt 3; Indiana 3; UC San Diego 1; Texas Tech 1; Arkansas 1.

USA TODAY Sports Women's Coaches Poll

Jan. 7

The USA TODAY Sports women's basketball coaches poll is conducted weekly throughout the regular season using a panel of head coaches at Division I schools. The panel is chosen by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association. The members represent each of the 32 Division I conferences that receive an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament. Each coach submits a Top 25 with a first-place vote worth 25 points, second place 24, and so on down to one point for 25th, with first-place votes in parenthesis.

	Record	Pts	Prv.
1. UCLA (31)	15-0	775	1
2. S. Carolina	14-1	741	2
3. Notre Dame	12-2	694	3
4. LSU	17-0	659	4
5. USC	14-1	654	5
6. Texas	15-1	630	6
7. Maryland	14-0	590	7
8. UConn	13-2	550	8
9. Ohio State	14-0	534	9
10. Kansas St.	15-1	480	11
11. Oklahoma	13-2	448	10
12. TCU	15-1	444	12
13. Georgia Tech	15-0	405	14
14. Duke	12-3	347	15
15. Tennessee	13-1	341	13
16. Kentucky	13-1	317	16
17. West Virginia	12-2	263	18
18. N. Carolina	13-3	230	17
19. NC State	11-3	215	19
19. Alabama	15-1	215	20
21. Michigan St.	12-2	163	21
22. Utah	12-2	86	NR
23. Iowa	12-3	82	22
24. Florida St.	13-2	58	NR
25. California	14-2	43	23

Others receiving votes: Baylor 34; Ole Miss 20; Vanderbilt 16; Minnesota 11; Michigan 9; Saint Joseph's 8; South Dakota State 5; Harvard 2; Creighton 2; Seton Hall 1; Nebraska 1; George Mason 1; FGCU 1.

GOLF

PGA Tour Schedule

Jan. 9-12 – Sony Open in Hawaii, Honolulu
Jan. 16-19 – The American Express, La Quinta, Calif.
Jan. 22-25 – Farmers Insurance Open, La Jolla, Calif.
Jan. 30-Feb. 2 – AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, Pebble Beach, Calif.
Feb. 6-9 – WM Phoenix Open, Scottsdale, Ariz.
Feb. 13-16 – The Genesis Invitational, Pacific Palisades, Calif.
Feb. 20-23 – Mexico Open at VidantaWorld, Vallarta, Mexico
Feb. 27-March 2 – Cognizant Classic in The Palm Beaches, Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

LPGA Tour Schedule

Jan. 30-Feb. 2 – Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions, Orlando, Fla.
Feb. 6-9 – Founders Cup, Bradenton, Fla.
Feb. 20-23 – Honda LPGA Thailand, Pattaya, Thailand
Feb. 27-March 2 – HSBC Women's World Championship, Sentosa, Singapore

TRANSACTIONS

Wednesday's Transactions

BASEBALL

Major League Baseball

ATHLETICS – CD Pelham Signed to a Minor League Contract.
CHICAGO WHITE SOX – Braden Shewmake Acquired Off Waivers to Kansas City Royals. Martin Perez Signed as Free Agent one-year contract. Jake Amaya Designated for Assignment. Corey Julks Outrighted to Minors. Josh Rojas Signed as Free Agent one-year contract.
HOUSTON ASTROS – Grae Kessinger Traded to Arizona Diamondbacks for RHP Matthew Linskey. Luis Garcia Signed avoids arbitration.
KANSAS CITY ROYALS – Braden Shewmake Acquired Off Waivers. Michael Lorenzen Signed as Free Agent one-year contract.
LOS ANGELES ANGELS – Brock Burke Signed avoids arbitration. Connor Brogdon Signed to a Minor League Contract.
NEW YORK METS – 2B Yonny Hernandez Signed to a Minor League Contract.
SAN DIEGO PADRES – Efrain Contreras Signed to a Minor League Contract.
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS – Austin Warren Designated for Assignment. Sam Huff Acquired Off Waivers.
TAMPA BAY RAYS – P Joey Krehbiel Signed to a Minor League Contract.
TEXAS RANGERS – Sam Huff Acquired Off Waivers to San Francisco Giants.
TORONTO BLUE JAYS – Hagen Danner Acquired Off Waivers to Seattle Mariners.
WASHINGTON NATIONALS – Joan Adon Designated for Assignment. Amed Rosario Signed as Free Agent one-year contract.

FOOTBALL

National Football League

ATLANTA FALCONS – LB Tyreek Maddox-Williams practice squad addition to Buffalo Bills.
BUFFALO BILLS – S Lewis Cine Activated from the Practice Squad to Philadelphia Eagles. LB Tyreek Maddox-Williams practice squad addition. DT Eli Ankou practice squad addition.
INDIANAPOLIS COLTS – DT Adam Gotsis practice squad addition to Tampa Bay Buccaneers. T Jack Wilson signed.
NEW ORLEANS SAINTS – C Sincere Haynesworth signed to Arizona Cardinals.
NEW YORK JETS – RB Zonovan Knight signed to Arizona Cardinals.
SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS – WR Ronnie Bell practice squad deletion.
WASHINGTON COMMANDERS – T Max Pircher practice squad addition. DT Haggai Ndubuisi practice squad deletion.

HOCKEY

National Hockey League

ANAHEIM DUCKS – RW Sam Colangelo Called up from minors from San Diego-AHL.
BUFFALO SABRES – C Tyson Kozak Called up from minors from Rochester-AHL.
COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS – C Luca Del Bel Belluz Called up from minors from Cleveland-AHL.
MINNESOTA WILD – LW Devin Shore Sent to minors Iowa-AHL. D David Jiricek Called up from minors from Iowa-AHL. G Dylan Ferguson Sent to minors Iowa-AHL.
NASHVILLE PREDATORS – LW Zachary L'Heureux Suspension Over.
SEATTLE KRAKEN – RW Daniel Sprong Waived.
VANCOUVER CANUCKS – D Filip Hronek Sent to minors Abbotsford-AHL for conditioning stint.

TENNIS ROUNDUP

Pegula reaches quarterfinals in Adelaide

FIELD LEVEL MEDIA

American Jessica Pegula plays a backhand in her match against Greece's Maria Sakkari during Day 3 of the Adelaide International on Wednesday in Australia. MARK BRAKE/GETTY IMAGES

Top-seeded Jessica Pegula cruised into the quarterfinals of the Adelaide International with a 6-4, 6-1 victory over Greece's Maria Sakkari on Wednesday in Australia.

Playing her first match of 2025 after a first-round bye, Pegula shook off the rust after falling behind 2-0. She broke Sakkari's serve six times to set up a meeting with fellow American Ashlyn Krueger, a 7-6 (4), 6-7 (4), 6-2 winner over No. 5 seed Paula Badosa of Spain.

No. 2 seed Emma Navarro reached the final eight with a 7-6 (4), 6-4 defeat of Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova. No. 3 Daria Kasatkina of Russia ousted Aussie Emerson Jones 7-5, 6-3. Madison Keys upended No. 8 Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia 3-6, 6-4, 6-3. Also advancing were No. 6 Diana Shnaider and Liudmila Samsonova, both of Russia.

Hobart International

The top three seeds advanced to the quarterfinals in Australia, with No. 1 Dayana Yastremska having the toughest time in a 1-6, 7-5, 6-2 defeat of Ann Li.

No. 2 seed Elise Mertens of Belgium and No. 3 Amanda Anisimova both won in straight sets. Mertens won 6-4, 6-3 over Mexico's Renata Zarazua and Anisimova won 6-3, 6-4 over Hungary's Anna Bondar.

Australia's Maya Joint pulled off the day's biggest upset with a 6-1, 6-1 triumph over No. 4 Magda Linette of Poland in 60 minutes. No. 6 Elina Avanesyan was a 6-2, 6-2 winner over Belgium's Greet Minnen and Russia's Veronika Kudermetova took down Colombia's Camila Osorio 6-4, 6-1.

Men
Adelaide International

Hometown favorite Thanasi Kokkinakis outlasted No. 8 seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry of Argentina in a 3-hour, 2-minute thriller in Australia.

Kokkinakis hammered 23 aces and saved five of six break points in the 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (4) victory, setting up a clash with No. 2 seed Sebastian Korda in the quarterfinals. Korda was a swift 6-3, 6-3 winner over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

Top-seeded Tommy Paul survived a 6-4, 3-6, 6-3 scare from French lucky loser Manuel Guinard, and No. 5 seed Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada rallied for a 1-6, 6-4, 7-5 defeat of Frenchman Arthur Cazaux. Australian Rinky Hijikata ousted No. 7 Brandon Nakashima 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (5). Marcos Giron, France's Benjamin Bonzi and Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic also moved into the quarterfinals.

ASB Classic

Czech teenager Jakub Mensik stormed into the quarterfinals in Auckland, New Zealand, with a 7-6 (2), 4-6, 7-5 upset of top-seeded Ben Shelton.

The 19-year-old Mensik offset seven double faults with 10 aces and saved five of six break points against Shelton, who valiantly fought off five match points and saved 11 of 12 break points. Up next for Mensik is No. 7 seed Nuno Borges of Portugal, a 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 winner over Argentina's Mariano Navone.

American qualifier Nishesh Basavareddy upended No. 2 seed Alejandro Tabilo of Chile, 6-4, 5-7, 6-4, while lucky loser Facundo Diaz Acosta of Argentina took out third-seeded countryman Sebastian Baez 6-4, 7-6 (1). Spain's Roberto Carballes Baena got in on the upset action with a 6-2, 7-5 defeat of No. 4 Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina. No. 8 Alex Michelsen, Belgium's Zizou Bergs and France's Gael Monfils also advanced.